1892.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:
REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In continuation of E.–1B, Sess. II., 1891.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

AUCKLAND.

SIR,— Auckland, 8th February, 1892.

We have the honour to present our report for the year 1891.

Two hundred and seventy schools were examined in standards, and two hundred and sixty-six were inspected. Some of the small and half-time schools were examined and inspected on the same day; some of those recently opened were not visited; and a few of the half-time schools, though examined in standards, were not inspected. The visit to the schools on the Great Barrier Island had to be postponed to a suitable date in the present year.

The percentage of passes in standards is 47·9, the percentage of failures is 17·5. These figures show an improvement when compared with those of 1890, which were 45·2 and 19·7 respectively. Of the 270 schools examined, thirty-six, or about 13 per cent., were reported as showing unsatisfactory results at the annual examination.

SUMMARY OF EXAMINATION RESULTS.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	84	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	736	25	22	173	516	14 4
" V. ...	1,746	100	81	528	1,037	13 6
" IV. ...	2,623	145	149	628	1,701	12 7
" III. ...	3,237	176	184	520	2,357	11 6
" II. ...	3,249	115	158	245	2,731	10 2
" I. ...	2,992	90	99	217	2,586	8 10
Preparatory... ...	8,152	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	22,819	651	693	2,311	10,928	11 10*

* Mean of average age.

The following table will give some idea of the proficiency of the schools in the pass-subjects, as shown by the percentage of failures. For the purpose of comparison the schools have been arranged in eleven groups:—

Schools.	Percentage of Failures.	Schools.	Percentage of Failures.
44	0 to 5	12	31 to 35
35	6 to 10	9	36 to 40
48	11 to 15	3	41 to 45
44	16 to 20	3	46 to 50
35	21 to 25	12	51 and upwards.
25	26 to 30		

When expressing our opinion on the results obtained by any school at the annual examination, we have, as heretofore, carefully considered any circumstances likely to affect the progress of the scholars. We have taken into account the attendance of the children, the number of classes to be taught, and the teaching-power available. It appears to us that, though it would be manifestly wrong to permit, and therefore to encourage, a lower degree of proficiency as qualifying for a pass in a small school than in a large one, yet the work done in the small school may merit approval or even praise, though the percentage of failures may be higher and the percentage of passes lower

than those which we should expect in order to obtain similar commendation in a large school. Some years ago the Inspectors recommended that two consecutive bad reports, or the continued alternation of a good and a bad report, should be deemed sufficient reason for dispensing with the services of the teacher concerned. We believe that, if this recommendation had been formally approved by the Board and embodied in their regulations, it would have had a good effect. Furthermore, we consider that no teacher whose work has been found to be unsatisfactory at the first examination of the school while under his charge should be transferred to another school, even though such removal be not promotion, until he has shown satisfactory work. We regret to have to say that, judging from what we have observed when visiting a school without notice, some teachers, and those not the least experienced, seem to regard their time-table as something of ornament rather than of use. We have sometimes found nothing on the time-table to show when the teacher is actively engaged with a class in contradistinction to silent work. On other occasions we have expected to hear a geography, grammar, or other oral lesson given, and have been surprised at the teacher proceeding to examine the class, or desiring them to "write a composition on your last lesson." When this happens we naturally conclude that the teacher has not prepared his work for the day. There is no doubt as to the necessity for such preparation. All authorities on school-management agree in this: that no teacher should enter school without having carefully thought out and prepared the lessons he intends to give. The time at which these lessons are to take place should always be clearly shown on the time-table, and the teacher's notes should be ready for inspection. We are quite aware that it may be necessary sometimes to omit a lesson, or, rather, to substitute one for another; but these occasions should be rare, and it is certainly unwise, to say the least, to select the day of the inspection visit as a fit time for such a change in the prescribed routine.

With regard to some of the subjects of instruction we offer the following remarks:—

There has been a decided improvement in arithmetic, both as regards accuracy and rapidity of work. In most schools the scholars showed a greater capacity for dealing with the simple problems which form part of every paper set. Increased attention, however, must be given to mental arithmetic.

Reading is perhaps one of the weakest points in our schools. We believe that the use of the new reading-books in Standard VI. and Standard V. will do much to produce a natural emphasis and modulation of the voice, as a result of a real comprehension of the subject-matter. We should be glad to see more than one book in use in each of the lower classes. We consider that it would be a decided advantage if several books were read during the year. The ability to spell correctly would be greatly increased, and, assuming the books to be well within the understanding of the children, their ideas would be widened, and the practice of original composition made more easy.

In the new standard regulations more prominence is given to composition as distinct from formal grammar. For many years past the scholars in this district have been trained to express their own thoughts in their own words in the form of letters or essays on given subjects, and, as a rule, the Inspectors have allowed good composition to atone for weakness in parsing and analysis of sentences. The composition exercises sent in during the year have been for the most part free from grammatical errors, though in other respects they too rarely merit commendation. This subject must be taught as well as practised. A good plan in teaching lower classes is that the teacher should display a picture or object, and, with the aid of the blackboard, get the scholars to write down in sentences of simple but appropriate language what they observe for themselves. In the three highest classes instruction in the writing of commercial and official letters should be regularly given.

The handwriting in the exercise-books has improved; generally speaking, fair specimens are shown in the copybooks. In Standard VI. and Standard V., however, many teachers have neglected to fully conform to the standard regulations.

Drawing calls for little comment; it has, without doubt, improved, and we have found that the full requirements of the syllabus have been more generally complied with. The new regulations affecting this subject have the merit of leaving little uncertainty in the mind of the teacher as to the amount of work to be done.

Geography has been, on the whole, fairly well taught, though the answers to questions on the mathematical and physical branches still leave much to be desired. They are usually too meagre. It is often hard to say whether this arises from imperfect knowledge or from inability on the part of the scholars to express themselves fully and clearly at a written examination. In some of the smaller schools, where this part of the work is generally taken orally, we have had reason to be pleased with the progress made.

It is rare indeed to find an object-lesson worthy of the name. Notes are freely used, but the lesson itself is frequently given in such a dull, mechanical, and unsympathetic way that it is not surprising to find the results so worthless. Speaking on this matter, Canon Daniel, Principal of Battersea Training College, says, "Children are not sufficiently required to use their senses. They are allowed to observe by deputy. They look at Nature through the eyes of books and through the eyes of the teacher, but do not observe for themselves. It might be expected that in object-lessons and in science lessons, which are specially intended to cultivate the observing faculty, this fault would be avoided, but I do not find that such is the case. I often hear lessons on objects that are not object-lessons at all. The object is not allowed to speak for itself, eloquent though it is, and capable though it is of adapting its teaching to the youngest child who interrogates it. The teacher buries it under a heap of words and second-hand statements, thereby converting the object-lesson into a verbal lesson, and throwing away golden opportunities of forming the scientific habit of mind."

In our last report we mentioned that we found, when questioning a class in elementary science,

that the answers were too often given by a very small portion of the class under examination. We notice but little improvement in this respect. We have again to urge the absolute necessity of teaching this subject experimentally. The great value of the science lesson is the bringing the mind directly into contact with fact, and practising the mind in drawing conclusions from the accurate examination of objects and phenomena. We recommend those teachers who can conveniently do so to attend the Saturday science lessons at University College, Auckland, that they may acquire skill in experimental work.

Generally speaking, the knowledge of history gained by the children in our schools is very scanty. It is a study that does not commend itself to the juvenile mind in this country. The best work is mostly in that part of the programme which treats of the events that happened during the Norman and Plantagenet periods, while the period from the Revolution to the present time, perhaps the most interesting to the adult student, seems to possess but little charms for young people.

Singing, needlework, drill, and calisthenics are taught with success in the larger schools.

It is again our duty to report in favourable terms of the good work done by female teachers in charge of small schools. In this connection we may remark that the career of a public-school teacher seems to present but few inducements to the best kind of Auckland boy. At the end of the year, of 195 pupil-teachers employed by the Board, only forty-three were males.

The schoolhouses and teachers' dwellings are in fair condition. Many teachers have made little attempt to beautify or even cultivate the ground surrounding their houses. Two reasons are generally given for this neglect—the first is the uncertainty of the teacher's tenure of his post; the second is the alleged poverty of the soil. The state of many country playgrounds still calls for improvement.

The school records have been more carefully kept; though it is still necessary to remind teachers that the admission and summary registers must not be neglected. A few cases of violation of the regulations relating to the daily register of attendance have been specially reported to the Board.

The general tone, discipline, and behaviour of the children in our schools are on the whole very creditable alike to teachers and pupils.

We append the statistical returns required by the Education Department.

We have, &c.,

JOHN S. GOODWIN,
WALTER HENRY AIREY, B.A.,
JAMES C. DICKINSON,
RICHARD CROWE,
} Inspectors.

The Chairman, Education Board, Auckland.

TARANAKI.

SIR,— Education Office, 17th March, 1892.

I have the honour to submit my report on the schools of the district for the year ending 31st December, 1891.

The number of schools at the close of the year was forty-five. Only two new schools—Hurford Road and Pungarehu—have been opened in the course of the year. That at Pungarehu is an aided one.

Visits of inspection were made to all the schools save the three in that portion of the Stratford County then within the Wanganui Educational District, but placed during the last quarter of the year under the Board's control. The schools at Pukearuhe and Hurford Road were not examined. The first-named had been arranged for on two occasions, but, through local circumstances, has not yet been overtaken. At Hurford Road the scholars are only beginning school-life, so that an examination was unnecessary. In future I shall give two or three days to the examination of those schools whose growth has made rapid strides in the past few years. I found the schools and grounds on the whole in a very satisfactory condition. Several are exceedingly well looked after, both by the Committees and the teachers. Some of the older buildings have had their rooms brightened by a judicious use of oil-colours, and I have heard of others likely to be treated in a similar manner. The gloomy appearance which the time-stained lining of the interior walls gives to the rooms has a very depressing effect. I am sorry to say that in some instances the teachers themselves do not appear to give this matter any consideration. Even the maps and lesson-pictures are kept out of view. Many of the pictures in magazines and newspapers could be easily prepared for the decorative treatment of the schoolroom. However, I am glad to notice the efforts of a few teachers of the right stamp, who can interest themselves in such matters, and can also find time and money to make and supply simple apparatus and appliances to aid them in the proper treatment of their class-lessons. How different to those whose apathy cannot allow them to drive an occasional nail or tack, or to do some slight repair to furniture or appliances! The school-furniture is, however, generally well preserved. But few articles, and these always of a minor character, are found missing in schools where so many changes of teachers take place. This can be accounted for by the teachers' compliance with the regulations, and the attention which the Chairmen of Committees give to the required checking of the property return when a change occurs. I am glad also to notice the almost entire absence of that spirit of indolence amongst the boys that shows itself in the disfigured furniture of the schoolroom. A few useful articles, such as large reading-sheets similar to the text-books in use, arithmetic sheets, larger maps, and blackboard rulers, have been issued, and I hope to have every school fully supplied with such during the present year. . . . .

The average attendance for the year shows no improvement. The low attendance at a number of the schools continues to have a very bad effect in adding to the difficulty of obtaining competent teachers. Efficiency in these schools is out of the question, hence the work of a year has to be

lengthened over two or more. It is very discouraging to see a good school, after several years of success, dragged down to the lowest level through frequent changes of the teachers, and their incompetency. Frequent complaints are made to me of the irregular attendance of families whose non-attendance cannot be accounted for by reason of distance or bad roads. The following—an entry taken from one of the quarterly reports—will show that frequent efforts to improve the attendance are not overlooked: "I have repeatedly interviewed the parents of these scholars, and received ample promises of reformation as to attendance, but very meagre performance of them." It is hopeless to expect improvement in several quarters without some drastic resolution of the Board. Further, this irregularity seriously hinders the preparation of the younger children in the preparatory classes, whose classification, now prominently before me at examination time, supplies such necessary information as enables me to watch the progress of each child. Many whose names appear for two to four years on these registers are unable to meet the simple requirements of Standard I., or the senior preparatory class. I have, in a number of instances where the ages ranged to fourteen years, tested such children, but have in every case been unable to advance the child.

The schools closed in December, 1890, with a register number of 2,701. In December, 1891, the number, reduced by withdrawals after examinations, was 2,997. The September quarter was, however, higher, the number being 3,052. The large increase in numbers includes the addition caused by the enlargement of the educational district in the same quarter. The number presented for examination was 3,005. This is exclusive of the numbers in attendance at the Pukearuhe and the Hurford Road Schools. 1,159 were presented in the preparatory classes, and 1,846 in standards. All the standards, especially Standard IV., show an increase of presentations. The absent and excepted numbers were respectively 131 and 112. The following table gives the remaining figures:—

Year.	Of Failures.	Of Passes.	On Class-subjects.	Of Additional Marks.	Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Drawing.	Arithmetic.	Grammar.	Geography.	Inspector's Marks.
1889	25·4	39·1	51·6	46·8	89·7	82·0	92·1	73·8	70·1	52·9	61·8	64·7
1890	23·8	41·1	54·9	49·7	90·9	84·2	92·9	86·4	73·5	57·8	69·4	63·9
1891	23·9	40·5	60·7	46·9	82·7	85·8	92·3	68·4	69·2	52·1	57·2	63·2

The work of the year has again been seriously interrupted. The removals of teachers have more than exceeded those of past years, with the result that the returns are nearly similar to last year's. I did not expect to see these percentages reached. The bad effects on several of the schools are shown in the low positions they take. An occasional failure may be expected, but where so many are working under serious disadvantages which shut out all hope of success the only plan is to encourage those in charge to work, so that no ground may be lost. In doing so, several subjects have to give place, frequently through the teacher's want of experience, to the more important ones which, it is desirable, should not be allowed to drift behind. This will account for the lower percentages in several of the subjects. With the experience of a year or two, however, most of the schools now in this unfortunate position should, if further changes do not interfere, take better positions, and therefore add to the future improvement of the yearly returns. In spite of these deplorable failures, good work has been done. Higher marks have been awarded on the papers than formerly, and a number of schools are year after year taking a better position. Wherever regularity of attendance and efficient teaching go together, there are evident signs of improvement. The results from the larger schools are making this more apparent. With two or three excusable exceptions, they are giving the best results and standing highest in position. The smaller, subject to continual changes in their teaching staff, are either fluctuating one way or the other, as the ability or the inexperience of their teachers may determine. The following shows the number of schools, and a rough estimate of their percentages of failures: In six schools the percentage of failures ranged from 0 to 10 per cent.; in thirteen, 11 to 20 per cent.; in ten, 21 to 30 per cent.; in six, 31 to 40 per cent.; in two, 41 to 50 per cent.; in three, 51 to 60 per cent.; in three, 61 to 72 per cent. The work in ten of the fourteen whose percentages ranged from 31 to 72 per cent. was several times interrupted by changes of teachers, or the schools were closed for a time.

The teaching of the preparatory classes is a decided improvement on that of the past. A system of classification is now generally followed, and the instruction is fairly well graded. It would be well to have in each school the scheme of lessons written out and shown on the wall or in the class-book. This plan is followed by a few teachers. Reading has been well prepared, especially at the Central, West Infants', Inglewood, and several other schools. Occasionally its treatment was moderate only; but the attention given to its instruction is certainly an advance on former effort. In arithmetic, the preparation of addition tables is frequently put to one side, and too great prominence bestowed on the teaching of mechanical arithmetic or process-work on slates. This is a mistaken idea, for teaching on such lines will not only hinder future progress and alacrity, but develop the bad habit of counting, with its waste of time. This is undoubtedly the chief factor that is still producing so many slow workers. The best advice is to keep the slate in the background until the mental addition tables are perfectly known by the pupils. Lead them to construct their own tables by comparison of objects and figures. Teachers who know this are ever watchful at this stage of the training of these classes. I have had in a few schools to call attention to the weak instruction of slate-writing. A low standard of quality satisfied the teaching in each case. For such, a visit to schools in the neighbourhood is the best remedy to bring about reform. Object-

lessons are too often left to the pupil-teachers and assistants for treatment. Text-book details are overdone, so that the lessons do not lead the pupils to think out for themselves the simple facts that are best suited to interest and strengthen their intellects. Trusting to a few suggestive words, likewise dispensing with text-books and full notes of dry detail, young teachers, when giving a lesson, should quickly gain the confidence needed to carry on a conversational style of treatment. The teacher should help and direct only, leaving the work to be done by the pupils, whose statements in sentence-form will afford ample matter for correction and reasoning out the simple facts he seeks to impress. Fifteen minutes spent in such a manner is worth hours of the injudicious methods so commonly followed and so elaborately planned.

Reading, spelling, and writing are progressing satisfactorily. The pass for the first named has been slightly raised by the introduction of a new text-book in Standard I. Spelling was, as usual, well prepared; the dictation-tests also were much improved in accuracy, and the writing of these was generally well done, although a few were below the average work of the district. The writing of the examination-papers was not always up to the mark. Occasionally the absence of any similar tests given by the teacher was made very apparent by the weak treatment of these papers. A monthly examination should at least be the minimum of effort in this part of the school-work. I cannot understand how any teacher can be satisfied about the state of his school without revising his teaching by periodic examinations.

A very marked feature of the examinations was the manner in which the mental-arithmetic papers were answered. Where formerly my patience was sorely tried, they were handed to me in fair time, and with surprising accuracy. I am pleased to recognise the efforts which are being put forth to push the improvement and instruction of this subject, which, in my humble judgment, should take the place of much of the problem teaching that demands so great a portion of the teacher's time, and yet with but very questionable profit in return. At any rate, I should like to see no problem work done on slate until the Fourth Standard was reached. Perhaps it may interest teachers to know that Longman's book is used in this district. It is a departure from the old stereotyped plan of teaching. About the only part of the arithmetic teaching I need allude to here was the treatment of the bill of parcels or commercial accounts in Standard IV. It appears that in the preceding year receipt forms were required. These evidently had been prepared for the recent examinations, but in a way that did not reflect any credit in some schools, as very many in receipting their bills wrote in full the usual receipt form. The difference between the receipted bill and the receipt cannot have been made sufficiently clear. The instruction appears to have been confined to the stamping of the account merely. A few minor matters in connection with the teaching of arithmetic are not referred to, as they can be better arranged for during the present year's inspection visits.

The greatest failures were in drawing, grammar, and geography. These subjects had been either weakly handled or occasionally set aside in the schools previously alluded to. Freehand drawing can be classed as satisfactory, although I have had to object to the use of measurements and the tracing of guide-lines with rulers. The blackboard is not freely enough used in the teaching of geometrical drawing. No amount of book-work will compensate the inability of the pupil to work out the problems from memory. Solid geometry, where prepared, was of a promising character. The elements of model drawing are fairly well known. In the majority of schools, inflectional grammar, especially in Standard IV., does not appear to receive its due share of attention. Whenever pupils realise its use in the daily composition lesson, the importance of this part of their study is more fully impressed. Teachers should keep this prominently before them when planning their scheme of lessons. Material progress has taken place in the teaching of composition within the last three years. Many creditable papers are now done by the senior pupils. The scheme of regular work in Standard III. has led to the teaching of the subject where formerly the pupil, lacking idea and words, was too often left to his own devices when set to make statements about objects around him. I have still to complain of the weak answering to questions on mathematical geography. This part of the subject cannot be sufficiently revised or tested, otherwise the statements made would have been less inaccurate than they frequently were.

Of the "class-subjects," science, in the schools that are efficiently conducted, is taught with greater or less success, according to the individuality or ability of the teacher. A few illustrate their lessons by apparatus of a simple but effective character. The difficulty and cost of obtaining material for such, however, prevent many teachers from adding to their apparatus by personal effort. At several schools I have accepted the object-lessons as an equivalent for the science, as greater benefit was more likely to result from such lessons than the questionable treatment of work which requires accurate statement and skilful handling. Although history is fairly well known in class, my written examinations cannot be reported in all cases satisfactory. This subject is certainly at its best in Standard III., where the selection is made by the teacher.

Recitation is the strongest of the "additional subjects." I am sorry that I could not always gratify my young friends by hearing more than a few stanzas from each class. The marked pieces in the new reader used in Standard I. have rendered great assistance, as at no previous time had the recitation been so well taught throughout the district. Still, a few teachers are easily satisfied with inaccurate repetition quite unworthy of the name. Military drill is successfully taught at a few schools, but in the majority the instruction is carried no further than the ordinary infant drill. Singing is chiefly confined to the preparation of a few songs. Only at two or three schools was part-singing attempted.

I have to refer, with pleasure, not only to the good order and discipline, which are as satisfactory as at any former time, but likewise to the general behaviour of the pupils, whose conduct is easily judged by the good tone in the schools.

In conclusion, I desire to express my thanks to the teachers for the ready co-operation and

support given me in all matters relating to the progress of education, and also to recognise their earnestness and fidelity in the discharge of duties which are frequently attended by difficulties greater than those existing in other districts. I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Board of Education, Taranaki. WILLIAM MURRAY, Inspector.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	2	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	53	4	1	16	32	14 11
" V.	146	9	9	59	69	13 7
" IV.	345	30	19	88	208	12 8
" III.	482	49	30	145	258	12 0
" II.	427	23	35	31	338	10 8
" I.	391	16	18	44	313	9 7
Preparatory	1159	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	3,005	131	112	383	1,218	12 2*

* Mean of average age.

WANGANUI.

SIR,— Education Office, Wanganui, February, 1892.

We have the honour to submit our report on public education in the Wanganui District for the year ended the 31st December, 1891.

PUPIL-TEACHERS.—The examination of pupil-teachers was held during the midwinter recess. In the First Class, 9 were examined, and all passed; in the Second Class, 8 were examined, and 7 passed; in the Third or lowest Class, 29 were examined, and 17 passed: totals—examined, 46; passed, 33; failed, 13. In addition to the foregoing, two pupils desirous of appointment as Fourth Class pupil-teachers were examined, but the work of both was very weak in nearly every subject. The work of the Third Class candidates was the least satisfactory. Of 29 candidates, 12 failed; and, had it not been for the high marks in needlework, there would have been five more failures among the female candidates.

The Inspector's report of the 5th August, 1891, dealt exhaustively with the work presented, but a word or two in addition may now well be said with regard to the training of pupil-teachers in the art of teaching. The necessity for personal supervision of the actual teaching done by cadets and pupil-teachers cannot be too strongly impressed on headmasters. In too many cases it is evident that these young teachers are allowed merely to "take" the lessons, and are not shown how to teach them to the best advantage—adopting the best methods and getting the maximum of intellectual effort and activity from the pupils with the minimum expenditure of energy on the part of the teacher. Of the cadets examined in the Third Class, some stated that they had never given a lesson of any kind to a standard, and others that they had never been shown any particular method of giving a writing-lesson or a reading-lesson. Such slipshod and unsystematic training, or rather want of training, indicates, on the part of the masters, a wilful neglect of the best interests of the apprentices under their charge, and it cannot be too strongly condemned.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS; ROLL-NUMBER; ATTENDANCE.—At the close of the school-year ninety-one schools were in active operation, with an average weekly roll-number of—males, 4,201; females, 3,964: total, 8,165; and an average attendance of—males, 3,078; females, 2,816: total, 5,894. The roll-number is 276 higher than the roll-number for the corresponding quarter of 1890. The highest number of schools open at any one time during the year was ninety-four. The decrease is accounted for by the fact that the three schools in the newly-formed Stratford County—viz., Ngaire, Bird Road, and Cardiff Road—were gazetted as belonging to the Taranaki District after the 30th of last September. For the four quarters of the year the mean average weekly roll-number was 8,224, and the mean average attendance 6,141, the former showing an increase of 446, and the latter an increase of 396, for the twelve months. This average attendance expressed as a percentage of the roll-number shows only 74·7, which is over 5 per cent. lower than the average for the thirteen districts in 1890, and nearly 10 per cent. lower than the average for Otago. At the same time, we note with pleasure that there is an improvement for the year of 0·9 per cent., notwithstanding the prevalence of the influenza epidemic. Still, making every allowance, it is not creditable that 25 per cent. of the children in the district make a practice of absenting themselves from school. In the report for 1890 this matter of irregular attendance was very fully treated.

STAFF.—We desire to say that we consider the average attendance—50—now required at a small school before the first pupil-teacher is appointed is too high, at all events if the six standards are represented at the school. In the Auckland District the limit for a sole teacher and one pupil-teacher is as low as 40. In deciding this matter, it appears to us that not only the average attendance should be taken into consideration but also the number of classes. Thus, one teacher with an average of, say, 47, from three standards and two preparatory classes, might well do justice to his pupils, but if the same attendance arose from six standards and two preparatory classes, it would not be easy for him to do so.

INSPECTION.—All the schools were duly inspected, with the exception of five, which were open for only a few months of the year. Patea, Whenuakura, and Maxwelltown were purposely visited both by Mr. Bindon and Mr. Spencer on different dates. Also several schools were visited twice by Mr. Bindon with a view of giving special help to inexperienced teachers who were in need of it. The reports were written in duplicate, one copy being sent through the School Committee to the teacher interested, and the other to the Board.

EXAMINATION IN STANDARDS.—Of the ninety-one schools in operation at the end of the year eighty-one were duly examined in standards. Of the ten schools not examined, Momohaki was closed on the day appointed for the examination, owing to both teacher and pupils being laid up with influenza, and, unfortunately, no other day was available; six were new schools not open for twelve months—viz., Hiwinui, Pukeroa, and Pemberton in the Oroua County; and Kaponga, Ratanui, and Mangatoki in the Hawera County—while the remaining three were old aided schools—viz., Glen Nevis, Upper Wangaehu, and Moutoa—which had been open only for short periods. The eighty-one schools were examined between the 31st July and the 19th December.

On the days appointed for the examination there were 7,695 pupils (3,978 boys and 3,717 girls) on the school-rolls, of whom 4,734, or 61·5 per cent., were presented for promotion in the six standards, 2,929 were in the preparatory classes, and 32 had already passed Standard VI. Of the 4,734 presented in standards, 4,434, or 93·6 per cent., attended and were examined, 300 were absent, 239 were excepted—that is, failed, but not having made more than half the possible attendances during the three quarters preceding the quarter in which the examinations were held, the failures were not counted against the schools—931 failed, and 3,264 passed the requirements and were promoted.

In the following tables (Tables A and B) will be found a condensed summary of the examination results for the past two years, the particulars of results in each standard, and the average ages of children in standards. Table C, which gives all the information found in Tables A and B, but with reference to individual schools, has not been printed, but it may be seen at the Board's offices.

TABLE A.

—	1890.	1891.
1. Presented in Standards I. to VI. inclusive	4,726	4,734
2. Preparatory class	2,866	2,929
3. Class above Standard VI.	41	32
4. Number on rolls on days of examination	7,633	7,695
5. Percentage of roll-number presented in Standards I. to VI. inclusive ...	61·9	61·5
6. Examined in Standards I. to VI. inclusive	4,443	4,434
7. Absent " "	283	300
8. Excepted " "	270	239
9. Failed " "	772	931
10. Passed " "	3,401	3,264
11. Percentage of passes, calculated on roll-number (4)	44·5	42·6
12. Percentage of failures "	18·5	22·2
13. Percentage of passes on number examined in standards	76·5	73·6
14. Percentage of passes on number examined in standards, omitting exceptions	81·5	77·8

TABLE B.

Number of Schools examined in each Standard.	Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Examined.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Failures.	Average Age of those that passed.
									Yrs. mos.
14	Above Standard VI.	32	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
54	Standard VI. ...	214	18	196	9	68	119	36·4	14 6
65	" V. ...	443	29	414	23	137	254	35·0	13 7
74	" IV. ...	864	73	791	48	280	463	37·7	12 9
77	" III. ...	1,051	80	971	73	262	636	29·2	11 10
77	" II. ...	1,066	50	1,016	53	88	875	9·1	10 8
79	" I. ...	1,096	50	1,046	33	96	917	9·5	9 5
*	...	4,766	300	4,434	239	931	3,264	22·2	12 1†

* Number of schools examined in one standard or more, 81. † Mean.

Upon comparing the foregoing tables for 1891 with the similar tables for 1890 we find that the number examined in standards, and the number examined in the preparatory classes, are much the same for each year, and also the percentages of the roll-numbers presented in Standards I. to VI. inclusive. With regard to the actual examination results, however, there is a serious increase in

the percentage of failures—that is, a decrease in the percentage of passes in every standard but the First and Second Standards, in which there is an improvement of 1·8 and 3·3 respectively. The falling-off varies from 7·1 in Standard IV. to 14·5 in Standard VI. In the Inspector's report for 1889 it was pointed out that, judging from results for some years, the upper standards of the majority of small schools would show really good results only every second year. The past year's results now appear to tend to strengthen that opinion. At the same time it should be mentioned that there was a great deal of illness during the months in which the examinations were held, influenza being particularly prevalent. During October and November we frequently had to allow children to leave a school before their examination was finished, owing to their being suddenly prostrated by this epidemic. Also, several children sat through examination who were really physically unfit to do so, as they had not completely recovered from an attack of influenza. While we could not but sympathize with the very evident disappointment of these children, we were pleased to find such commendable eagerness on their part to attend the examination and to get through their work successfully. Notwithstanding the epidemic, the number of children examined in Standards I. to VI. inclusive was at the rate of 93·6 out of every hundred presented in those standards.

Last year the great decrease in the number presented in standards above Standard III. was pointed out; this year a similar decrease is very noticeable, as will be seen by looking at Table B. Thus the numbers in Standard I., Standard II., and Standard III. are in each class just over 1,000; the number in Standard IV. is 82·2 of the number in Standard III.; and then comes a remarkable drop, the number in Standard V. being only 51·3 of the number in Standard VI., while the number in Standard VI. falls to 48·5 of the number in Standard V. Another calculation will be of interest: In 1887 there were 1,059 children in Standard I., while this year there are only 443 in Standard V. Now, as the latter expressed as a percentage of the former reads only 42, this means that 58 per cent. of the pupils originally enrolled in Standard I. in 1887 did not reach Standard V. A similar calculation with regard to the highest standard shows that 80 per cent. of those enrolled in Standard I. in 1886 did not reach Standard VI. Against this we are glad to find that the proportionate number of pupils remaining at school after passing Standard VI. has gradually increased year by year, and by 12 per cent. in five years.

A general idea of how the eighty-one schools fared at examination, as far as percentages are concerned, may be gathered from the following: No failures, 3 schools; below 10 per cent. of failures, 9 schools; 10 per cent. of failures, but below 15 per cent., 11 schools; 15 per cent. of failures, but below 20 per cent., 11 schools; 20 per cent. of failures, but below 30 per cent., 26 schools; 30 per cent. of failures, but below 40 per cent., 13 schools; 40 per cent. of failures, but below 50 per cent., 4 schools; 50 per cent. of failures, but below 60 per cent., 2 schools; 60 per cent. of failures, but below 70 per cent., 2 schools: total, 81 schools.

That percentages are misleading goes without saying. In the foregoing list the work was not always equally good in schools with similar percentages, nor was it always best in the schools with no failures, or in those with very few failures.

INSTRUCTION.—Table D, which follows, shows for each standard the percentage of pupils that passed in each of the pass-subjects. Excepted pupils were not excluded, but, nevertheless, a general idea of how these subjects were taught may be obtained from the table.

TABLE D.

Classes.	Reading.		Dictation and Spelling.		Writing.		Arithmetic.		Grammar and Composition.		Geography.		Drawing.	
	Number examined.	Per Cent. passed.	Number examined.	Per Cent. passed.	Number examined.	Per Cent. passed.	Number examined.	Per Cent. passed.	Number examined.	Per Cent. passed.	Number examined.	Per Cent. passed.	Number examined.	Per Cent. passed.
Standard VI. ...	196	96·9	196	83·6	196	97·2	196	59·6	196	58·6	196	62·7	196	95·4
" V. ...	414	92·7	414	71·5	414	92·7	414	68·8	414	65·4	414	52·4	414	93·4
" IV. ...	791	86·1	791	59·8	791	87·7	791	58·2	791	61·9	...	...	791	85·5
" III. ...	971	83·1	971	66·6	971	87·1	971	72·9	971	67·3	966	80·0	971	91·8
" II. ...	1,016	85·9	1,016	91·1	1,016	88·7	1,016	85·0	...	...	...	...	1,016	88·8
" I. ...	1,046	83·5	1,046	91·5	1,046	91·7	1,046	90·2	...	...	...	...	1,046	91·6
Totals ... 1891	4,434	85·9	4,434	78·1	4,434	89·7	4,434	76·2	2,372	64·5	1,576	78·7	4,434	90·7
Totals ... 1890	4,443	87·2	4,443	80·2	4,443	96·7	4,443	79·4	2,391	67·6	1,637	80·2	4,276	94·4

Reading.—The percentage of passes in this subject was considerably the highest in Standard VI.—96·9—and lowest in Standard I.—83·5. On the whole, the reading should have been much better at very many schools in the lower standards. In Standard I. we sometimes found pupils unfamiliar even with the words of the text, though only one little book had been used during the school-year. It must again be pointed out that many failures in this important subject result from the fact that teachers do not train their pupils to read in a sufficiently loud tone, and to enunciate distinctly. If muttering were not passed over during the year, there would be no trouble on that score on examination-day. Also, during a reading-lesson a teacher should not, by engaging in other work, lose command over his pupils. Provincialisms, misuse of the aspirate, and the dropping of

the voice at every pause were some of the most frequent errors that should be guarded against in future. Also, to the treatment of the logical divisions of the sentence particular attention should be paid, for, as one of the southern Inspectors tersely puts it, the teacher, by enabling his pupils to appreciate the formation of phrases, has ready to hand a lever of vast power for teaching not merely reading, but also grammar, analysis, and composition. Again, no pains should be spared to secure from the very outset distinct articulation, purity of pronunciation, and a good style; and perhaps these would be oftener found if more time were spent by teachers themselves in acquiring the art of reading aloud. Expression and modulation varied very much, according to the individuality of the teachers. To the position of their pupils when reading some teachers should pay more attention. The reader should stand upright, with head erect, with book held well up, but not so high as to conceal the face, and with the right hand behind the back. Lazy attitudes tend to produce false work, and to the competent judge they at once betray false work. In the preparatory classes still more attention should be paid to word-building, and to thoroughly grounding the children in the long- and short-vowel sounds and in the functions of the consonants. The highest class should have mastered the "Queen Infant Reader" by the examination-day. Comprehension of the subject-matter (placed in a very subordinate position in the syllabus) was not good, as was brought to light not only by oral questions but also by written questions. In some schools it was quite impossible to get a full and intelligent answer in the pupil's own words to any question requiring the meaning of a phrase or clause. The children must have some ideas about what they read, but they require training and encouragement to enable them to express those ideas in sentences of their own making. Teachers should not rely much on the definitions and synonyms given at the end of the lessons, "many of which," to quote an Inspector of another colony, "are so obscure as to remind one of the definition of a net given by Johnson in the first editions of his dictionary. 'A net,' says the great lexicographer, 'is a reticulated substance with interstices at the point of intersection.'" The want of variety in the text-books, we consider, militates greatly against obtaining good reading. In a class the same book is thumbed over and over again, until the lesson cannot fail to lose interest, and, as both Inspectors and teachers are aware, they are often known by heart. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that few pupils acquire any love for reading. As a remedy to some extent, we think that the use of a supplementary series of reading-books should be insisted upon. Some of our teachers put their pupils through a play of Shakespeare, but in most cases the subject-matter had not been clearly explained. In Otago the Inspectors examine the reading in each standard in two books. School-libraries would help to excite an appetite for reading, which, after all, is the main business of a primary school. In the Colony of South Australia an attempt has been made by the Education Department to do this by issuing to the schools a small paper called "The Children's Hour," which contains stories and poems of an attractive nature. Access to interesting books must enlarge the knowledge of pupils, must extend their vocabulary, and must at the same time contribute to the improvement of their reading. Until reading is not associated with difficulty, pupils cannot be expected to keep it up after they leave school.

Dictation and Spelling.—Again, this year, these subjects were found from bad to poor in all classes above Standard II. For all standards taken together, the average percentage of passes—78·1—is low, and this notwithstanding the high percentage of passes in Standard I. and in Standard II. From 91·5 in Standard I. the percentage drops to 66·6 in Standard III., and to 59·8 in Standard IV., recovering somewhat in Standard V. (71·5) and in Standard VI. (83·6). The extraordinary fall in the percentage of passes in Standard III. and Standard IV. is no doubt partly due to the fact that teachers are inclined to trust too much to the spelling of selected words, to the neglect of dictation. It does not follow that because a child can spell the more difficult words in a book he can write correctly a piece of dictation selected from the same book. We found that in the dictation exercises many of the errors occurred in the smaller words, and even in those words which pupils daily use. Such an experience clearly shows that dictation did not receive due attention throughout the year, but rather was left to the last moment, or was not taken at all. And, unfortunately, bad spelling in a school shows itself in other subjects besides dictation. Pupils were required to write letters or essays on familiar subjects, but these were sometimes almost valueless on account of the number of words incorrectly spelled. Also, the papers in physical geography, history, &c., were frequently marred by the same fault. It was often noticed that pupils could spell orally single words which they had misspelled in dictation or composition. This may have been due to inattention or carelessness on the part of the pupils, but we are afraid that too often it was the outcome of slovenly correction of the ordinary exercises on the part of the teacher. And we are led to this conclusion from the following: In order that teachers might find out the weak points in the work of their pupils they themselves were generally asked to correct the papers, we, of course, going through them afterwards and assigning marks. We regret to have to say that those papers were, as a rule, very poorly marked, and that thorough correction was the exception rather than the rule. Now, such slipshod correction must exercise a very baneful effect upon the children and their work, for a wrong impression once formed and passed over without correction is rendered much more difficult to remove. As the eye rather than the ear is the means by which new words are acquired and incorrect spelling detected, the importance of frequent practice in writing words is evident. The intimate connection between good reading and good spelling and dictation also should be noted. In schools where the enunciation is good and the pronunciation correct the dictation is generally satisfactory, for, while during the reading-lesson the attention of the pupils is directed to an unfamiliar word, a correct impression of such word is stamped indelibly on the visual memory. Year after year the attention of teachers has been drawn to the weakness in spelling and dictation in this district, but as yet without bringing about any decided improvement. It should be remembered that, although good spelling is not esteemed an accomplishment, bad spelling is looked upon as a very serious defect.

Writing, although showing a falling-off in the percentages of passes in all standards, generally

afforded much ground for satisfaction, the work at many schools being very fine. Some teachers should pay more attention to the position of pupils in desks, and to the manner in which the pen is held. Even in the very lowest classes the pupils should be trained to hold their pencils properly.

Arithmetic.—Of the seven pass-subjects arithmetic stands sixth in order of passes, with a percentage for all standards of 76·2. Comparing the percentages of the past two years we find an increase in Standard I. and in Standard II., and a decrease—varying from 5·5 in Standard III. to 17·6 in Standard VI.—in each of the remaining standards. Such a great falling-off tends to bear out the opinion that the highest standards in the smaller schools do really well only every second year. In Standard III. failure was generally due to inaccuracy, and such inaccuracy was as often as not found in simple tables in division sums, or in subtraction. Standard IV. shows the lowest percentage of passes—58·2—and here there was a great deal of inaccuracy in bills of parcels and in practice. In the latter rule, the common habit of putting down an aliquot part as part of another which was not in the pupil's working is a very silly one. But in this class reduction was perhaps the worst-taught rule, linear measure and square measure again being confused, and multiplication used for division, or *vice versâ*. In this rule the names of denominations always should be written to the right of the lines. At inspection visits it was sometimes found that pupils who had been working square measure for some time did not know what is meant by the term a square foot, and could not show that there are nine square feet in a square yard. In Standard V. the percentage is 10·6 higher than that in Standard IV. Interest was the best known rule (methods of working often poor), and fractions the worst, though some improvement was found in the latter. In proportion pupils should be taught, after stating the sums, to arrange the terms in fractional form. In Standard VI. the percentage is the second lowest—59·6—and the work often was most disappointing. In practical sums in mensuration, fencing, and the like, the manner in which linear measure and square measure were confused pointed to great thoughtlessness and unsoundness—*e.g.*, multiplying the length of a field by the breadth to find the distance round. The arithmetic in Standard VI. at Hawera was very good.

Having now pointed out the most noticeable faults and shortcomings, we desire to say that at several schools the arithmetic throughout was very fine; and that at several others, while some of the pupils in most classes showed good methods and arrangement, many broke down, this pointing to lack of thoroughness in teaching. At a few schools, some of them large ones, the teachers year after year fail to secure good arithmetic. This, we think, is mainly due to an insufficiency of blackboard teaching—or to faulty questioning when the blackboard is used—and to the misuse of examination-cards and books. With regard to the former, we are afraid that some teachers seldom use a blackboard at all to introduce a new rule, while at some of our inspection visits we noticed other teachers spending as much as half an hour in educing some point that should have been self-evident to well-trained and attentive pupils, or that should have been known months previously. With regard to the latter, pupils too often are given examination-cards to work before they really know all the rules represented on the cards, or they are asked to work through an example at the end of a chapter in an arithmetic in which many of the sums are beyond them. As before pointed out, teachers would find examination-cards with six or eight sums in one rule very useful. The time taken over the arithmetic varied very much at different schools, being three times longer in some schools than in others. In future, pupils will be strictly limited in this respect.

Grammar, with Composition, showed, for all standards taken together, the lowest percentage of passes of the seven pass-subjects—viz., 64·5—Standard VI. being at the bottom with 58·6. There is little or nothing fresh to add to what has been written in former years with regard to this subject. We should like to see the pupils of Standard III. and Standard IV. trained in a more systematic manner to determine what part of speech a word is from the particular function of such word—naming, telling, describing, connecting, &c. In Standard V., parsing often was badly done, inflections of the verb especially being seldom well known. In the highest standards, at very few schools indeed could the pupils give any sensibly-expressed reasons for their corrections of false grammar. Questions requiring explanations of phrases or sentences taken from the reading-books, such explanation to be written in sentences of the pupil's own making, were either badly answered or not attempted.

In composition, as has been already mentioned in this report, many essays were rendered utterly valueless by bad spelling. More attention should be paid to punctuation and to the fundamental rules of syntax. In Standard III., the indiscriminate use of the personal pronouns often spoiled the work. Written composition would be better if pupils were really taught to talk—to express in oral work their ideas in clear statements, not in disconnected words. Readiness of speech is a fitting prelude to fluent composition; monosyllabic answers, so often heard at our schools, are not to be reckoned speech at all.

In Geography, Standard V. showed the lowest percentage of passes, Standard III. the highest. For the three standards taken together in which geography is a "pass"-subject the percentage was 78·7. In the highest standards nothing varied so much as mapping, which at some schools was excellent, at others very bad. Important ports were not well known with regard to the countries to which they belong and the rivers or seas upon which they are situated, while descriptions of trade routes often showed strange confusion of ideas with regard to the map of the world. We should like to have found the elder pupils more familiar with the fauna and flora of countries, and with the principal articles of commerce and manufactures of the more important—of Great Britain and her colonies at all events. New Zealand appears to have little honour amongst her own children, for it was generally omitted from the list of wool-producing and gold-producing countries. Now that New Zealand exports so much frozen meat, La Plata should be noticed in the same connection. The questions in physical geography, though particularly simple, were very often badly answered. Year after year it is very strange what hazy ideas pupils have about evaporation and condensation, about latitude and longitude, about climate, and the distribution of plants in this connection.

Teachers appear to have neglected the syllabus requirements for Standard V. especially, for at school after school the pupils would not attempt to write anything about the distribution of land and water, and they failed to define mountain systems and river systems. It should be remembered that not only is physical geography more attractive to a child than political, but also it is far more useful as a means of intellectual discipline.

Drawing showed a high percentage in each standard, that in Standard VI.—95·5—being the highest, and that in Standard IV.—85·5—the lowest. In the lower standards the pupils should know, without being given any assistance, exactly in what position to sketch the freehand copies in their books. Several teachers made the mistake of having the preliminary sketches copied, whereas these are meant only for guides, to show how the drawing is built up. (This is fully explained in the instructions on the cover of the drawing-book, with which teachers would do well to make themselves thoroughly acquainted.) In the upper standards more accuracy in scale drawing would be desirable, and all measurements should be neatly marked in. Teachers will please notice that in future their pupils will be required at the annual examination to make a drawing in a given time in the presence of the Inspector. The examples and problems for examination will be those that are to be found in "Blair's Colonial Drawing-books."

CLASS-SUBJECTS.—The class-subjects for the year were history in Standard III. to Standard VI., geography in Standard II. and Standard IV., and science and object-lessons in all standards. Drawing dropped out, it having become a "pass"-subject in one or more standards year by year since 1885, and 1890 was the last year in which it was a "class"-subject in any standard.

History.—The number of schools in which history is well taught in Standard III. slowly increases year by year, but it is still very poorly handled by several teachers, whose attention we desire to draw to the Inspector's report for 1886 on this subject. A few good pictures for purposes of illustration would be found very useful in teaching history to this standard. In Standards V. and VI. the subject seldom was well known. Some pupils were examined on paper, and some orally. The written papers often showed very confused ideas, and bad spelling, composition, and arrangement. Teachers might notice that at very few schools could pupils make out a genealogical table, and that at fewer still was anything about the government and constitution under which we live really understood. If the teacher is to make history interesting it is absolutely necessary that he should possess the power of "picturing out,"—*i.e.*, of describing that which is distant in time or space so vividly and naturally that the hearer seems to see it. "Lessons in history are too often only a string of bare, meaningless, isolated, chronological facts, which appeal to no sympathy and awaken no interest; the persons referred to are names and nothing more; the description of events referred to calls up no image of what really happened. Such lessons as these leave no definite impressions upon the mind of what the teacher has been talking about, and the pictures which they call up, from lack of a judicious selection of details, and the harmonizing influence of some dominant and unifying idea, are blurred, confused, and ineffective. The imaginative teacher, who is seeking to cultivate the imaginative faculty in his class, and to utilise it in his teaching, will clothe the characters of history with flesh and blood; he will, as far as it is possible, make them live and move before our eyes; he will convert us, as it were, into actual spectators and auditors in the scenes which he describes."

Geography obtained the highest percentage of marks of the three "class"-subjects. In Standard II. work, teachers should try to educe their definitions by the use of actual models, and by reference to local examples. It should be remembered that a definition is often as difficult as the thing it is used to explain—sometimes more difficult. Definitions are convenient, because they contain in a few words the pith or substance of what it takes a good many words to explain; and so they help the pupil to remember and the teacher to recapitulate and examine. But their place is at the end, not at the beginning, of the lesson or section of a lesson. Let things be taught first, and then let formal words be used to impress the lesson on the memory. "Get your plank exactly into its place before you nail it, and then hammer away at the nail as hard as you please. If you drive the nail without careful fixing beforehand, the harder you hit the farther wrong you go." A certain amount of rote work undoubtedly is necessary, as, for instance, in the various tables, and in definitions in grammar, arithmetic, and other subjects; but one teacher will rely on bare repetition, while another will see that each step is understood before being committed to memory. In the former case the tabulated facts are merely mechanically suspended in the mind, in the latter they are mentally assimilated.

Science is one of the most unsatisfactory subjects of the school course. To call the matter taught in the schools science is a misuse and a degradation of the term. Moreover, the name is apt to frighten teachers who have not undergone a course of study in the "ologies" and the "ics." Much better results might be looked for if teachers regarded it as "useful knowledge"—science it is not, and never can be—and, bringing into play the natural curiosity and inquisitiveness of children, sought to arouse and sustain their interest by explaining many of the every-day phenomena which are to them inexplicable. But we are afraid that too often a lack of interest and enthusiasm on the part of the teacher checks the ardour of the young inquirer, and creates in him a positive distaste for the work. In endeavouring to place this subject on a more satisfactory footing, there are two serious difficulties to contend with—(1) Want of sufficient knowledge on the part of the teacher, (2) want of appliances and apparatus. With regard to the former, it must be admitted that teachers who have had some scientific training have a considerable advantage over those who have not; but there is no reason why a zealous, earnest, and conscientious teacher should not read up and obtain a sufficient mastery over his subject to be able to teach intelligently the elementary work required in the schools. With regard to appliances, teachers often complain of the want of these for illustrating the lessons. This, no doubt; is a serious drawback, but much can be done by the teacher in the way of procuring simple and inexpensive means for demonstrating experimentally the facts brought out in the lesson. For instance, in many schools

lessons on the expansion of bodies by heat are given, yet often the actual expansion is not shown to the class, whereas this can easily be done by means of a ring and a piece of metal (iron rod or bolt), which would cost the teacher no more than the trouble of looking for them.

Some of the foregoing remarks with regard to science apply to object-lessons also. The lessons often are not well prepared by the teachers; the inductive method is not sufficiently employed; the children are told too much, in place of being trained to examine, observe, and discover for themselves. As Herbert Spencer observes, "To tell a child this and to show it the other is not to teach it how to observe, but to make it a mere recipient of another's observations—a proceeding which weakens rather than strengthens its powers of self-instruction, which deprives it of the pleasures resulting from successful activity, which presents this all-attractive knowledge under the aspect of formal tuition, and which thus generates that indifference and even disgust not unfrequently felt towards these object-lessons." A mistaken idea also is too prevalent—that supplying children with difficult words as names of properties is conveying information. On the other hand, it should be mentioned that some female pupil-teachers were seen giving very fair object-lessons. Every head teacher ought to try to have a collection of common objects in his school.

Additional Subjects.—The average number of marks obtained by each school in the additional subjects was 44·2. This, however, gives no idea concerning the efficiency of the teaching in these subjects, for the number taken up varied at different schools. Thus, singing was taught at very few schools; needlework only at those schools where the sole teacher was a female, or where there was a female assistant; while extra drawing was, naturally enough, very seldom presented.

In the subject-matter of the reading-lessons the pupils, as has been before stated, were very poorly trained.—*Needlework*, as far as purely manual work is concerned, was often very good indeed, especially at the large schools. Whether the girls were equally proficient in cutting out and fixing we have no means of telling, for the work was done during the school-year, not on examination-day. A tendency to extravagant ornamentation of underclothing might be stopped.—*Recitation* varied very much—from sheer nonsense and sing-song to a really nice interpretation of the piece learned. Where recitation was really good no lesson seemed to be so thoroughly enjoyed, while where it was bad the pupils evidently looked upon it with much distaste. The most frequent faults were very incorrect or too rapid enunciation, want of knowledge of the meanings of words and phrases, absence of proper emphasis, and a running of words together. Many teachers are satisfied if the words are accurately learned (too often they were not so learned), and they do not consider it necessary to teach the children to enter into the spirit of the piece, and to recite with expression. If proper attention were given to training the ear, and to obtaining nice inflection, modulation, and expression, recitation would be a valuable help to reading. Indistinct utterance in reciting poetry quickly forms a habit that it is very difficult to get rid of. Really bad recitation is, perhaps, most frequently due to the following: Children easily learn the necessary amount of poetry, and this when learned they continue repeating week after week, a monitor or young teacher being set to hear them. In time they get away from the original words, and repeat sounds nearly resembling them, without the slightest idea of conveying sense by the sounds.

Of the discipline, tone, and behaviour of the pupils at the majority of schools we are very pleased to be able to speak in high terms. Grave offences are very rare, and for severe punishments there appears to be seldom any need. During the examinations especially the children were very attentive, diligent, and well behaved; and that the examination itself at most schools was a source of pleasure to the candidates was very evident. On our inspection visits we sometimes found that disorder creeps in at change of lessons and at dismissal, that lounging is too common, and that class-motions are not always carried out as well as they might be. To ourselves we found the pupils of all but a very few schools most courteous and respectful, not only in the school-buildings, but also on the roads or streets. We should, however, like to see amongst the pupils themselves a more forbearing and courteous spirit in their relations to one another. Rudeness during games, pushing in class-marching, and such-like are too common. Also, boys might be led to cultivate a more chivalrous spirit towards girls. The idea "she is only a girl" is too common.

Buildings; Playgrounds.—A large proportion of the buildings are in very fair repair, but some small ones, which were erected many years ago, are fast decaying. During the year some school-buildings and teachers' residences were painted, and at several places additions and improvements were effected, and shingled roofs were covered with iron. Some of the residences are too small to be comfortable, and this evil leads teachers to desire a change to another school. All the class-rooms built during the past eight years are neatly varnished and painted inside, have stepped floors, and are supplied with dual desks. At a few schools unsuitable antiquated desks and forms are mingled with dual desks; and, while the former act as a foil to show the superiority of modern appliances, they entail great inconvenience and disadvantage to both teachers and pupils. The schools at Waitotara and Whenuakura furnish an apt illustration of this condition of things. A few small schools are not regularly swept, the excuse given being "capitation grant too small." Also, in some of the back districts it is difficult to find any one willing to undertake the work. More attention should be paid to the proper ventilation of class-rooms. Many teachers seldom pull down the top sashes of the windows, but, instead, throw up high the bottom sashes during school-time, as entailing less trouble; and pupils, in consequence, are frequently sitting in a draught. During recesses both sashes should be opened. As all the window-sills of the more modern schools are provided with boards running some distance up the windows there need be no draught even when it is desirable to open the bottom sashes during school-time. Some teachers do a great deal to improve the appearance of their class-rooms, while others, notwithstanding all that has at one time or another been written on the subject, display no interest whatever in this, as it appears to us, important direction. Thus, at one school the walls are nicely decorated with maps, pictures, and

aids to teaching; ferns and other plants are growing in pots; specimens of insects, minerals, and raw articles of commerce are displayed on the mantelpiece and shelves. At another school, with precisely similar advantage, an appearance of apathy and discomfort prevails; the rooms are not properly swept and dusted; no attempt is made to enliven the appearance of the place; the maps, cards, &c., are not hung, or they are hung in a stiff and formal manner, with bad taste. Such as the teacher is, so will the school be, was the impression conveyed to our minds at these different kinds of schools. Sanson, and the infants' department in the new building at Palmerston, are good examples of the former kind of school, as also several of the small buildings in new settlements in the bush, such as Kairanga, Fitzherbert, Rata, and Birmingham. We are sure that those teachers who go to a little trouble and expense in beautifying the rooms in which they work find an ample reward in the improved taste, enlarged ideas, and more thorough intelligence of their pupils. Also, by this means teachers can do a great deal to promote amongst their children a feeling of loyalty and pride in the school, and consequently the attendance is improved.

Several Committees and teachers have done a good deal in the direction of improving the playgrounds in bush districts by clearing away the logs. Trees have been planted in some grounds; but this is a matter that might receive attention at more schools. Trees grow very quickly in this district, and, apart from their ornamental and economic purposes, they provide a pleasant shade for children during play-hours, as well as shelter from the frequent winds. If an "arbor day" were instituted it might be productive of much good, and lead the children to take a pleasure in the planting of trees and flowers. Then, also, the settlers might catch the infection, and something more would be done to replace the thousands of acres of forest that are annually burnt. In a few playgrounds the children have gardens, and they take the greatest pleasure in attending to them. This is a taste which we should like to see more generally cultivated. Broken gymnastic apparatus gives a very untidy appearance to some playgrounds. Some teachers might pay more attention to the playground life of their children. In the playground the teacher can see to what extent his lessons have been beneficial in forming the character and habits of those committed to his care.

Organization and Methods.—We gave considerable attention to these during our inspection visits; much was done in the way of conferring with and giving advice to teachers regarding them, and more or less full reports were written for each school. In this report, under the heading "Instruction," some hints have been given with regard to methods of teaching certain subjects, but a few further remarks in that connection will not be out of place now.

As long as there are so many small schools, and as long as teachers have so few opportunities for self-improvement, there must be a great deal of poor and misdirected teaching. In a great many cases a teacher never sees a school but his own from year's end to year's end; and so one subject may continue to be taught well, and another badly. Some years ago it was recommended that teachers should obtain a day's leave now and then from their Committees and visit other schools. Several teachers with much benefit to themselves took advantage of the recommendation; some even went so far as to take their holidays at a different date from the majority of schools, so that they might spend considerable time in seeing the methods of other teachers, but not so many as might well have done so. That there is too much aimless, haphazard teaching was often made very plain to us. Many a teacher showed that he did not know what form his lesson was to take until he started to give it, whereas he should have drawn out beforehand written notes of the lesson. Lessons generally, we find, are not prepared and arranged so as to form part of a scheme which will give a complete and thorough knowledge of the subject.

Another fault we frequently had to point out was, there is too little *viva voce* teaching, several teachers being quite content to keep their pupils employed at slate-work, while they themselves walk about and supervise. Owing to so little actual teaching being shown to the Inspector, it was often difficult for him to form the opinion which he is required by the department to express upon the merits of teachers. We are glad to see that teachers now more generally put their pupils standing in oral work. In this work simultaneous and indiscriminate answering require to be kept within bounds (this has invariably to be pointed out to newcomers).

That the blackboard is not made sufficient use of was very evident at many schools. Thus, to give one example of this neglect, in reading and spelling lessons to the lower standards we often noticed that, though the children were quite ignorant of certain words, the teacher did not write such words on the blackboard, whereas they should have been written thereon in syllables. In most oral lessons an abstract should be put on the blackboard as the lesson proceeds. Such abstracts show in black and white the information it is desired to impart; they are useful in the recapitulation that always should take place at the end of a lesson; and, when properly put down, they serve to train the pupils in nice arrangement of work. In *teaching*-lessons in arithmetic the blackboard should be very freely used, especially when introducing a class to a new rule, or when educing the various stages in a problem. Recapitulation is not sufficiently employed in the various oral lessons.

The inductive method of teaching should be more largely employed. Many teachers suppose that this method applies to object-lessons only; some do not practise it even in these. The teacher who merely tells his pupils what he should lead them to discover for themselves makes but a feeble impression on their minds. If education is to be a training of the faculties, if it is to prepare the pupil to teach himself, something more is needed than to pour in knowledge, as into a vessel, and make the pupil reproduce it. "The need for perpetual telling results from our own stupidity, not from our pupils'." That which is a mere routine of statement, question (on the statement made), and repetition cannot be called teaching. With a view to encourage the inductive method, questions bearing upon it have been set each year on the School Management examination-papers for pupil-teachers. Inquisitiveness in children should be encouraged. Very rarely is a child heard to ask a question while the lesson is proceeding.

It should also be pointed out that some principal teachers think they have done their duty if they have taught the higher standards well, and they excuse bad work in a lower class because "the assistant (or pupil-teacher) is responsible." A teacher of this kind is unmindful of the fact that every class is his, and that it is as necessary for him to give his assistants opportunities of teaching the higher standards as it is for himself to personally teach the lower; to say nothing of it being his duty to try to improve, when possible, the methods of all teachers under him. When assistants, either from incapacity or from indifference, are found doing bad work, principal teachers should not hesitate to report them to the Board; for the training of some hundreds of children is of more importance than the reduction of a teacher in the service. The duty is an unpleasant one; but, unfortunately, any one who accepts a responsible position must make up his mind to have many unpleasant duties to perform. Responsibility and duties disagreeable, but nevertheless duties, are generally concomitant.

One more matter we would point out. At some schools there does not appear to be any definite plan for the proper distribution over a given time of the teaching of the various subjects. At a school recently inspected seven months after the last annual examination, no geometry had yet been taught in Standard IV., and no drawing in books in Standard I. Teachers should know exactly what they are going to teach each week and for several weeks at a time, and for this purpose they should make out written programmes showing the work contemplated to be taught. This was pointed out in the report for 1889, from which we beg leave to quote the following: "In New South Wales teachers are required to keep programmes of the work to be done, and statements of lessons given. We think the practice has several advantages. The necessity for arranging the course of instruction for three or six months beforehand prevents too much time being spent over part of the work, and compels the teacher to weigh the importance of the different portions to be dealt with, so as to assign to each its proper number of lessons. The lesson-books enable the master to judge to some extent of the character of the work done by assistants and pupil-teachers, help the Inspector in forming his judgment on the school, and, where there is a change of teachers, show the newcomer exactly what his class or the several classes have been taught. In many schools in this district, when a change of teachers takes place, the incoming teacher has little or nothing to tell him what the various classes have been taught; whereas, if some such book as the one mentioned were kept, he would easily know where to take up the thread of the teaching."

Examinations by teachers should be held periodically, but these should be only in the work already treated. Inspectors' examination-cards should not be used, as is often done, until the whole ground has been covered. Teachers themselves should frequently make out examination-cards, which should be suitable tests for the work done up to date.

Reduction and Promotion of Teachers.—It seems to us a matter of regret that some teachers who are found inefficient in certain schools cannot readily be reduced in the service by giving them a smaller school, in preference to inflicting the severe punishment of dismissal; and also that others, who have shown exceptional merit, cannot with more surety be promoted. A teacher who is unfitted for a large town school might conduct a smaller one in the country in an efficient manner; but, should it be necessary to remove him from the former school, dismissal is practically all that is in the power of the Board. Again, a young, zealous teacher may be almost thrown away at a very small school, yet it is often very difficult for him to secure promotion owing to the present regulations for the appointment of teachers.

The New Syllabus.—A new syllabus has been issued, which came into force on the 31st of last December. The most noticeable changes are: that grammar has been made a "class"-subject in all standards in which it is required except Standard IV.; that composition and grammar now count two "pass"-subjects in Standard IV. (formerly grouped as one), while composition without grammar is a "pass"-subject in Standard III., Standard V., and Standard VI.; that drawing and geography have been more clearly defined; that the requirements in drawing have been increased, especially in Standard I. and Standard IV.; that a considerable amount of mathematical geography is now required in Standard IV.; that history has been materially lightened; that more latitude has been given to teachers in the direction of allowing them to classify their pupils for instruction and to group different standards in certain subjects.

We are rather disappointed that nothing has been done in the way of allowing sole teachers of small schools, in which all or nearly all the standards are represented, to omit the class-subject history, as has so often been recommended by Inspectors and others. It seems to us a mistake to require that all the subjects of the syllabus shall be taught at all schools whether small or large, whether in cities or in the heart of the bush. When one teacher has, unaided, to teach all the standards, we think that the time now given to history could be far more profitably employed in teaching reading. If history must be included in the syllabus, we should like to have found merely an historical reader specified for very small schools. Also, the wisdom of increasing the work in some subjects in Standard IV. appears to us rather doubtful. We make these remarks, however, with all diffidence, for the syllabus is yet untried.

We are glad to see that the requirements under the heading "Elements of Agricultural Knowledge" are so clearly defined. As, presumably, so many of the boys attending our public schools will in time to come be engaged in farming pursuits, the proper treatment in the schools of this branch of science should bear good fruit in the near future.

We desire to draw the attention of teachers to the following regulations and requirements especially. With reference to reading it is laid down that the Inspectors "are not to be satisfied with any reading that does not convey to their minds the assurance that the pupil does understand the passage read. Mere utterance of the printed words will not suffice; there must be such intonation and emphasis as are required to express the meaning and spirit of the passage: this must be insisted on, even in the First Standard." Under the subject "Drawing" it is enacted that the pupils in Standard I. must be able to use set-squares and flat rulers, and draw figures with sides of prescribed

length. It might be noticed that a great deal of the work for this standard will require oral teaching and examination, that object-lessons on "Form" will be found a great help, and that the lessons should be illustrated by models in tin or cardboard. Regulation 5 with regard to the presentation in Standard I. of children over eight years old is a radical change in the right direction.

MAORIS.—It affords us great pleasure to be able to report most favourably upon the excellence of the work presented by the Maoris at most schools where they were found. They appear to be gifted with fine observing and imitative powers, and with retentive memories, and in consequence they show special aptitude for drawing, writing, and arithmetic. Reading is their great trouble, but the now pretty general practice of teaching words by the phonic system is fast clearing away what at first appeared insuperable difficulties in this subject, and now it is by no means uncommon to hear Maoris reading quite as correctly and as distinctly as children of British descent. We cannot speak too highly in commendation of those teachers who are taking so much pains to educate their Maori pupils.

In conclusion, we desire to speak in high terms of the assiduity, earnestness, and devotion to their work displayed by the teachers of this district as a body. Certainly they have taught with varying degrees of power and skill, and, consequently, with very varying results; but we think we are right in saying that much hard work has been done, and that the majority of teachers have manifested a desire to succeed. The assistants and pupil-teachers, with a few exceptions, have ably seconded the efforts of the principal teachers. Some of the young teachers now in charge of country schools, but who were till recently pupil-teachers, have done very good work indeed, although the management of several classes at the same time was quite a new experience to them.

We have, &c.,

W. H. VEREKER-BINDON, M.A., Inspector.

W. E. SPENCER, M.A., B.Sc., Assistant Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Wanganui.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,— Wellington, 29th February, 1892.

We have the honour to present a report on the State schools of the Wellington District for the year 1891.

The number of schools open was eighty-one, eight more than in the previous year, the new schools being at Ohau, Kereru, Ballance, Kaitawa, Alfredton, Ditton, Grassendale, and Stoke's Valley, most of them being small schools in comparatively newly-settled localities. The total attendance at the time of the examinations has increased from 10,694 in 1890 to 11,205 in 1891—an increase of 511. The school accommodation is sufficient, except in the Newtown, Masterton, Pitone, and Vogeltown districts. The Clyde Quay School is fully occupied; but, as long as there is spare accommodation in the Terrace School, we do not look upon this as a pressing case. The Newtown School, with over 800 children on the books, is now large enough, and a new school is required for that end of the city. The inside walls and ceilings of nearly all the city schools would be much improved by painting and renovation. External painting is also required for two or three of them. All the schools have been duly examined; and an additional visit of inspection was paid to all, except some of the smallest in Classes D and E. Some of the largest were visited more than once.

The total number of children passed in standards, not including those who failed in the next higher standard, is 6,574, as compared with 6,334 in 1890—an increase of 240. The following table shows the passes made in the several standards compared with those of the previous year:—

Year.	Standard I.	Standard II.	Standard III.	Standard IV.	Standard V.	Standard VI.
1890	1,330	1,377	1,456	997	727	447
1891	1,379	1,412	1,322	1,240	760	461

The results in the several standards show a satisfactory uplift of the work, the increase in the higher standards being considerable. The marked increase in Standard IV. led to a consequent depression in Standard III. It will be seen that we have now, roughly speaking, about the same number of children in each of the first four standards, and that year by year the numbers in the higher standards are increasing. It is found that the excellent science and drawing instruction together with the more intelligent standard and class work of many of the best schools is having the effect of inducing parents to keep their children longer at school. Taking the schools *en bloc*, there has been a steady progress—quite equal to, if not exceeding, the average of the past five years—in the management, maintenance, discipline, tone, and quality of the class instruction. No part of the standard work shows a falling-off during the year, whilst the quality of the reading, spelling, composition, mental arithmetic, physical geography, and writing is much improved in many schools—not to mention for the present the special science-work for the year, which is its chief characteristic.

Referring to the several classes or groupings of the schools according to size, as tabulated in the appendix to this report, it will be seen that the nine largest in Class A range in attendance from 458 to 806. The total of these nine schools represents about one-half the whole attendance of the district. The best of them met the examination with the splendid success recorded in the column of the percentage of failures, which vary from 1 per cent. to 7 per cent. And these results were obtained in schools working without pressure and with scarcely any home-lesson work. The class work of these schools is quite as satisfactory as the standard work, and the head teachers and class instructors are, with very few exceptions, complimented on the work. Schools and classes are not alike and never will be. Every head teacher and every class-teacher puts his own *imprimatur* upon his work. As is the teacher so is the scholar. Hence it is that every school has its own characteristics. Thus, at Newtown, drawing from the object, experimental chemistry, admirable Standard III. work, accurate Standard II. arithmetic worked on paper, and clear utter-

ance of speech in junior class reading, are striking features. Clyde Quay is distinguished by excellent discipline and all-round management, by the uniformly sound character of the work, by its musical marching, and by the almost total absence of failure in spelling tests. The leading points in the Masterton work are the highly commendable quality of the work of Standard IV., the thorough teaching of physics, and its cadet corps. Te Aro presents an excellent arrangement of object-lesson work on a scientific basis, good singing and recitation. Thorndon has an established lead in singing, drawing, and science. The special science-room is fitted with a heliostat and every apparatus to meet all requirements in chemistry and physics. The Terrace School show strong arithmetic in classes S 6 and S 7, good singing, map-making, drill, and excellent all-round work in Standard IV. The salient features of Mount Cook Boys' School are the excellent handwriting of classes S 5, S 6, S 7, the quality of the work in Standard V., and the physical drill of the cadet corps. The best subjects taught in the Mount Cook Girls' School are singing, needlework, and botany; and in the Pitone School, Standard II. arithmetic and object-lesson work. All the subjects of the syllabus are taught in each and all of these schools. Also, interesting readings are given regularly once or twice a week by all the class teachers.

The seventeen schools in Class B range from 101 to 286 in attendance, and contain 2,784 children, or about one-fourth of the total of the district schools. With the exception of some depression in the condition of the Taita and Featherston Schools, the results are good and the quality of the work improved. The improvement is most marked at Fernridge, Greytown, Hutt, Mangatainoko, and Vogeltown. Fernridge presents as salient features excellent drawing, science, recitation, and drill. Greytown is distinguished by neatness and accuracy, and by excellent S 6 and S 7 arithmetic and study of Scott. In the Hutt, good Standard VI. arithmetic and excellent reading in Standards II., III., IV., are met with. The singing and recitation at Mangatainoko and Vogeltown are much commended. The class-rooms in the main Wairarapa schools are still the best-furnished in the district, and kept with the greatest care. With the exception of the singing at Otaki, Fernridge, Taita, and Hutt, all the subjects of the syllabus are taught in all the schools of Class B; and readings by the teachers, as recommended in last year's report, are now given in all of them. We hope to see arrangements made next year to give instruction in singing in the schools just named. In some cases, perhaps, the work can be done by special local visiting teachers; or else, when a vacancy occurs, a teacher may be selected for the staff who is competent to undertake it.

In Class C are fourteen schools with from fifty-one to eighty-four children in attendance. Owing to the rearrangement of the Inspectors' work this year, in consequence of the appointment of an Assistant Inspector, these schools were examined about a month earlier than usual, and this of course was a disadvantage to them. We made all possible allowance for this, but still the results at Waihakeke and Waihenga were below expectations. The others, including Kaiwaiwai and Pahautanui, with moderate averages, were in a more or less satisfactory condition. We were much pleased with the general management of the Park Vale, Porirua, Makara, and Manakau Schools. No "readings" were given at Dalefield, Mauriceville East, and Kaiwaiwai; and no singing was taught at Park Vale, Pahautanui, Mauriceville West, and Kaiwaiwai. In other respects the subjects of the syllabus were fairly met. The remaining schools under one teacher were nearly all examined within eleven months of the previous examination, and consequently at a disadvantage. Apart from these considerations, there was ground for complaint in a few of them. The condition of each has been specially reported on, and it is hoped that in the weakest much improvement will be apparent next year, and especially in those whose present record is over 15 per cent. of failures. Singing is not taught at Wallace, Tauherenikau, Paikakariki, Kaitawa, Dreyerton, Opaki, Gladstone, Ballance, Judgeford, Shannon, Paraparaumu, and Cross Creek; and "readings" are not given at Tauherenikau, Paraparaumu, Ohariu, Paikakariki, Judgeford, and Matarawa.

The two large infant schools in Wellington and the one in Masterton are working satisfactorily. The Mount Cook Infant School continues to serve as a good training-ground for many of our pupil-teachers.

Instruction in needlework is given in all schools with more than one teacher, except, of course, Mount Cook Boys' School; and in the small schools, excepting only one or two in charge of masters, to which a sewing-mistress is not appointed. In one school (Kilbirnie) all the boys of the upper classes learn to knit, and many of them knit very well. The lady examiner of the work of the city schools reports that, with the exception of that at Newtown and Clyde Quay, there was much greater uniformity in the variety and quality of the work shown. By the adoption of the "miniature" system recommended in last year's report, there was a greater variety of work done by individual pupils. Besides plain sewing, knitting, darning, patching, frock-making, herring-bone and feather-stitch (for flannel work) were taught. Clyde Quay was deficient in variety, Newtown in quality. Improved needlework was also shown in many of the larger country schools—Greytown, Vogeltown, Taueru, Featherston, Hutt, Kaiwara, for instance,—and the knitting of children's undergarments was a good feature of the year. The needlework is far from being up to standard requirements in many small schools; but on the whole an honest effort is made to meet requirements; and in many, including nearly all the largest, really good work is done.

The instruction in drill throughout the district has been for some years under the direction of an expert, M. de Mey, who is a very capable officer. He visits the city schools once a week when in town, and makes a tour of the district two or three times a year. The exercises taught include Swedish drill, pole drill, military or squad drill, Indian clubs, and gymnastics. All these exercises are taught, some to boys and some to girls, in the largest schools, and generally two of them in all other schools. Regular cadet corps are formed at Mount Cook Boys' and Masterton, and it is recommended that others, which for some time have been in abeyance, be revived. The instructor is also a careful teacher of deportment, and is mindful of the physique of his pupils, being ever careful not to overtax their strength. The Swedish, pole, and Indian-club drills are practised with success

and effectiveness, and the movements often keep time to music, and are well calculated to assist physical development. Many of the schools include these exercises in the popular entertainments now frequently got up for the benefit of school funds, and they make a very pretty display. In some instances M. de Mey complains of the difficulties he experiences in getting the pupils to provide themselves with the necessary clubs or poles. Of course it is impossible for him to do more than generally direct the work, and on the teachers the brunt of the work necessarily falls. They are now readily assisting in bringing about a commendable state of efficiency.

Drawing is under the control of the Director of the Wellington Technical School, Mr. Riley, who has issued a syllabus on the lines of the amended code, specifying exactly the work recommended for each standard in the several subjects—freehand, scale, geometry, and object. This programme is approved by us, and is in general use. There has been some falling-off in the freehand work in the schools during the past year; but, on the other hand, geometry, scale, and especially drawing from the object, show much progress. Most of the teachers of any standing have passed the second-grade drawing examination, and very many of our pupil-teachers hold full second-grade certificates. As a consequence, the instruction under so able a director as Mr. Riley is becoming very satisfactory. A close inspection of the work of large classes appears, however, to reveal the fact that the aims of teachers are often too ambitious, especially in freehand drawing, and that too difficult exercises are given. It almost goes without saying that a simple freehand exercise very accurately and very neatly done is a far better result in every way than a difficult exercise rudely drawn. It must always be borne in mind that in freehand work the main thing is the ability to make a clean, light, fine, straight or evenly-curved line. Scores of the class drawing-books still show lines so heavily dug in that when once drawn they can never be erased. At the annual examination in first-grade drawing the following were the results of 4,750 papers by 2,545 individual candidates: Freehand, 557 passes out of 1,377 papers; model, 143 passes out of 350 papers; geometry, 743 passes out of 1,164 papers; scale, 460 passes out of 859 papers: total, 1,903 passes out of 3,750 papers. This is a small decrease in the passes of last year, but a higher standard was looked for. Of course the number examined in the year is not an estimate of the whole work of the schools. Many children now on the books have previously passed in one or more sectional subjects, and of these there are 225 who have obtained full first-grade certificates, *i.e.*, who have passed in all four subjects. The following table will show the growth of the work:—

CERTIFICATES ISSUED IN FIRST GRADE.

	Freehand.	Model.	Geometry.	Scale.	Total.
1884	81	...	...	...	81
1885	128	...	105	...	233
1886	232	...	284	...	516
1887	170	57	103	72	402
1888	302	47	154	108	611
1889	403	91	477	147	1,118
1890	689	75	821	381	1,966
1891	557	143	743	460	1,903
Totals	2,562	413	2,687	1,168	6,830

The greatest features of the past year's work, which indicate the most marked improvement in educational work, are the arrangements now completed for the advancement of practical scientific teaching. They may be conveniently classed under three heads—(1) Kindergarten occupations for the lower classes; (2) object-lessons on a scientific basis for the middle classes; and (3) experimental-science instruction proper for the upper classes of all schools. To carry this full programme out successfully the teachers have been consulted and their wishes studied in the matter. They have readily and enthusiastically entered into the plan, which we all conceive to be conducive to the spread of more wholesome, more interesting, more educative, more digestive, and far more practically useful knowledge than much of that hitherto imparted. And first as to the kindergarten occupations. We have prescribed four—mat-plaiting, stick-building, modelling in clay, and colour-teaching—to be taught in all schools to infants, and in small schools to Standard I. children. The Board has readily granted money for the full supply of necessary mats, needles, sticks, metal joints, clay, boards, tools, beads, coloured films, &c., to meet the programme. All schools are now supplied, printed instructions have been issued, a kindergarten mistress has visited most of the schools to give directions, a reserve supply of material is at hand, and the whole is now in fair working order. In point of fact, many of the schools, especially the three large infant schools, have done some excellent work. Another year will probably lead to much improved work in many of the other schools; and teachers are earnestly requested to steadily and persistently pursue the work, for it is invaluable as a training for the hand and eye, and as the first step to the cultivation of observation and thought, which the object-lesson work and science teaching will develop.

Secondly, as regards the object-lesson work of Standards II. and III. We retain the name only for convenience. This work is now held to be the inculcation of the first principles which underlie all scientific knowledge, given in so simple a form, with homely experiments of an attractive character, that the pupil imperceptibly gets a clear understanding and grasp of the great truths of science. Such subjects as the following are taken, the head teacher directing the class teachers how to treat the subject, and providing them with lamp, test-tube, materials, &c., to perform the simple experiments pointed out as necessary to illustrate them: Atoms, adhesion, cohesion, hard and soft, light and heavy, specific gravity, heat, liquids, air, carbon-dioxide, metals, water, pressure, solvents, expansion, balloon, attraction, mixing colours, clay, oil, soap-bubble, evaporation, carbon, sulphur, phosphorus, plain and solid figures cut out of paper. Rick's "Object-lesson Book" is found a useful guide, both the first and the second series; but the book is by no means closely followed in

our best schools. The head teacher plans and directs the whole course. It will be seen that such lessons, carefully prepared as they must be, and given in very simple form, with the absence of technical terms, with such experiments as are positively fascinating and good fun to children, will prove excellent educational pabulum of a very refreshing order, and will afford material on which the superstructure of the upper-class science-work can be raised. Not in all schools is this work well in hand yet; but many schools are on the right lines, and have already accomplished something which will lead to much more in time.

And lastly, as to the work of elementary science of Standards IV., V., VI., and the class above Standard VI. Four programmes have been drawn up: one in chemistry, including the elements of agriculture; one in physics, including heat and a little light and electricity; one in physiology; and one in the elements of botany. Text-books have been named for each subject, and the amount of instruction looked for in each subject accurately defined. The Board has again liberally voted a grant for the supply, free of charge, of necessary apparatus for chemistry and physics, and of the necessary diagrams for physiology and botany, to all schools. Messrs. Mowbray, Hulke, and Watson, headmasters of city schools, have rendered valuable assistance in drawing up directions and in putting together necessary apparatus. This apparatus is now furnished to nearly all the schools. The appendix will show what schools were able to take up the science during the past year, and the next column will show that every school will take up one at least of the four subjects next year. Thus the movement is fairly launched, and there will be no difficulty in future in keeping up the supply of material and apparatus. Full instructions are now sent out with the apparatus, as to how to use it; and, as each teacher must fully qualify himself for the teaching of the subject which he elects to teach, it is reasonably expected that year by year greater efficiency will be shown. Already many of our assistants and pupil-teachers in the large schools are taking great interest in the work. All the larger schools are teaching two or more of the best subjects, and in a very interesting manner. In the appendix, a record will be found, in a special column, against each school of the present estimated value of the instruction in science. This, so far, is very satisfactory, but it shows how much necessarily remains to be done. Year by year we hope to report considerable improvement.

The following is a summary of the number of schools of each class in which science work was taken up in 1891:—

	Class A.	Class B.	Class C.	Class D.	Class E.	Total.
Chemistry taught in ...	8	6	7	3	...	24
Physics " ...	6	5	1	8	1	21
Physiology " ...	4	5	3	5	...	17
Botany " ...	1	1	...	4	...	6
No science at present taught in ...	...	...	3	10	7	20
Total schools in each class exclusive of infant schools ...	9	17	14	30	18	78

We have endeavoured to encourage the formation of school libraries, as a means of diffusing knowledge and encouraging the habit of profitable reading and self-culture. Several new libraries have been started during the year of which we have not yet received a return. Of those whose returns came in with the examination schedules, the following is a list, with the number of volumes in each case: Fernridge, 400; Terrace, 371; Clyde Quay, 304; Thorndon, 300; Pahautanui, 275; Featherston, 266; Clareville, 228; Masterton, 212; Mount Cook Boys', 170; Johnsonville, 138; Manakau, 120; Mangatainoko, 110; Otaki, 100; Dalefield, 86; Karori, 70; Belvedere, 61. Next year we will give a more complete return, as we intend still further to encourage the movement.

The few changes recently made in the syllabus by the Education Department are generally acceptable. The drawing programme can only be gradually worked up to. In this district the changes will be scarcely felt, as much liberty has already been given in the direction taken.

We are pleased to notice that there exists a good spirit of work and an increased fondness for school-life among the pupils throughout the district, and a hearty, loyal, and contented feeling among the teachers.

We have, &c.,

ROBERT LEE,
T. R. FLEMING, } Inspectors.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Wellington.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed. Yrs.	m.
Above Standard VI. ...	198	...	...	...	...	...	
Standard VI.	553	12	19	61	461	13	7
" V.	896	27	41	68	760	12	10
" IV.	1,467	37	82	108	1,240	12	0
" III.	1,656	73	107	154	1,322	11	0
" II.	1,668	66	103	87	1,412	9	9
" I.	1,445	41	7	18	1,379	8	8
Preparatory	3,322	...	...	...	...	...	
Totals ...	11,205	256	359	496	6,574	11	4*

* Mean of average age.

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,— Education Office, Napier, 1st January, 1892.

I have the honour to submit my summary report upon the progress of education in the schools under the Board for the year ended 31st December, 1891.

As the Board are aware, full reports upon the work of each school in the district have already been submitted by me, together with such details, showing the results gained by each pupil in the standard examination, as are required by the regulations of the Education Department. In addition to the ordinary work of inspection and examination of the schools, examinations have been held—(1) of pupils belonging to the upper department of the Gisborne District High School; (2) of pupils who entered as candidates for the Board scholarships; and (3) of the pupil-teachers who are required to be examined year by year, according to the regulations dealing with their appointment, service, and training. Special reports have also been submitted to the Board on account of each of these examinations, so that any remarks I have to make on the work of the year should be considered in the light of the reports and the statistical information already submitted.

The number of schools in operation at the end of the year was forty-nine. These contained fifty-one separate departments, with accommodation for 5,842 pupils. Forty-seven schools were established at the date of my report last year, the additional schools being a small school-of-ease at Woodville, which is carried on in a temporary building provided by the residents of that district free of charge, and the reopening of the school at Tarawera, which was closed a year ago. Although the increase in the number of new schools makes but small progress, there has, nevertheless, been a commendable increase in the school accommodation in the districts already established. During the year new school-buildings or additions have been completed at Patutahi, Gisborne, Napier, Meanee, Ashley-Clinton, Matamau, and Kumeroa; and in several places needful repairs have been made to teachers' residences. In most cases the schools are fairly supplied with apparatus and appliances, and, as a rule, these are kept in good order and repair. I regret that no provision has yet been made in the majority of the schools for the teaching of elementary science. This can only be done with any hope of success by supplying the schools with cheap and suitable apparatus and diagrams; and I would again urge upon the Board the desirability of carrying out this necessary work as soon as possible.

It is to be regretted, so it appears to me, that provision is not made for the erection of additions in brick in all the larger centres of population. In other educational districts I believe that this plan is now generally followed, and it would certainly be economical in the matter of maintenance were a similar plan adopted here for school districts like Napier, Gisborne, and Hastings. In the country districts, also, where the population is unsettled, a type of building is desirable such as could be erected and taken down at little expense, and removed if need be from one place to another.

For each school established in the district a principal teacher is provided, but in seven instances the teacher in charge has no certificate of competency from the Education Department, whose province it is to grant them; and in two other places the schools are staffed by teachers holding licenses only, or, in other words, by teachers who have not yet succeeded in obtaining the lowest full certificate issued by the State. With a single exception, the schools which are in the hands of uncertificated teachers are subsidised ones, and I doubt whether certificated teachers could be found to supply the places of those now in charge, as the salaries are too small to command the services of competent and skilful persons. A similar remark applies to those schools that are in charge of licensed teachers. Altogether seventy-five certificated teachers are employed by the Board, exclusive of seven licensed teachers, and of nine ex-pupil-teachers, who hold what are known as district licenses. Teachers' licenses are only tenable for a period of two years, but as long as they are current the holders are deemed to be certificated in the district where employed. Thus, it may be said that there are at the present time ninety-one teachers holding certificates of competency engaged in the Board schools. This would give a certificated teacher on the average for every sixty-six pupils attending school. Of those who are certificated, ten are English-trained, and twenty-seven have been trained as pupil-teachers under the Board, and have subsequently passed the requirements at the annual examination for certificates.

Omitting the attendance of pupils at the Woodville Side School and at Tarawera, the number returned as attending school at the date of the examinations was 5,923, or 191 more than for the corresponding period of 1890. In the two schools named, and which were not examined for results, the attendance amounts to about seventy, so that altogether 6,000 pupils were actually attending the Board schools at the time when the examinations were in progress. The classification of the children gives 3,828 as presented for examination in standards, and 2,095 as belonging to the junior or preparatory classes. Of the 3,828 pupils scheduled for examination, 75 were absent, 18 had already passed the Sixth Standard, 142 were excepted under Regulation 6, not having fulfilled the required conditions as to attendance, and 742 failed to reach the standard entitling them to a pass. Deducting these items from the total presentations in standards, there remain 2,851 pupils who have been promoted to a higher standard. For the year 1890 the passes were 2,788, and the presentations in standards 3,732. In the following tabular statement the presentations, failures, &c., in each standard are given, and, for the purpose of comparison, the results for the years 1889 and 1890 are also included;—

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Examined in Standards.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
							Yrs. m.
Above Standard VI.	18	...	18	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	174	6	168	1	48	119	14 1
" V. ...	372	12	360	14	137	209	13 0
" IV. ...	605	14	591	18	150	423	12 3
" III. ...	750	7	743	34	140	569	11 7
" II. ...	919	18	901	48	144	709	10 5
" I. ...	990	18	972	27	123	822	9 6
Preparatory ...	2,095	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	5,923*	75	3,753	142	742	2,851	11 9†
Totals, 1890 ...	5,732	86	3,646	126	695	2,788	11 9
Totals, 1889 ...	5,691	66	3,539	134	641	2,897	11 9

* 74·7 per cent. of those presented passed the examination. † Mean of average ages.

In twenty-two schools all the pupils on the roll were present on examination-day; in eighteen schools there were no "excepts," and in ten of them there were pupils attending who had already passed the Sixth Standard.

The above summary table should be read with the one appended to this report, which gives the comparative results for each school in what are technically known as pass, class, and additional subjects [not reprinted]. In the requirements of a standard pass, eighteen schools succeeded in passing 50 per cent. or more of their pupils in one or other of the Standards, fifteen schools passed 40 per cent. and fewer than 50 per cent., five schools passed between 30 and 40 per cent., whilst nine schools fell below the standard of 30 per cent. of passes.

In the class-subjects six schools gained over 75 per cent. of the possible marks in history, twelve gained a simple percentage in geography, and ten in object-lessons and elementary science; whilst in the additional subjects, which may or may not be taught at the option of a teacher, twenty schools obtained 75 per cent. or more marks in recitation, eight in drill and calisthenics, ten in singing, thirty-seven in needlework, and four schools gained extra marks in drawing. These results represent schools only where the several subjects are well and efficiently taught even beyond the ordinary requirements of a standard pass. In all schools it may be said that the class-subjects receive fair attention, but among the optional subjects the most popular are repetition, which is taught in forty-five schools, drill in twenty-five schools, singing in thirty-five, sewing in thirty-seven, and in forty schools marks were given for a knowledge of the subject-matter of the reading-lessons. Four schools obtained the mark "excellent" for drill and calisthenics—namely, Waipawa, Hastings, Gisborne, and Ormond—and I wish that members of the Board could be induced to visit these schools and compare them with other schools where drill is not taught, as I am satisfied that something would soon be done to bring the physical and mental training of the children attending the Board schools into closer harmony.

At Port Ahuriri special instruction is given to the upper-standard pupils in the principles of temperance, and Dr. Richardson's school reading-book on temperance is used as an equivalent to Mrs. Buckton's "Health in the House," under Regulation 16 of the Standards of Instruction. In the majority of the United States of America scientific temperance instruction is made compulsory as a subject for all schools, and I shall rejoice when the same recognition is made in this country, for it seems to me that the only way to eradicate a growing evil like intemperance is through the medium and instrumentality of the public schools.

The character of the work done has not varied largely from that described by me in previous years. In the majority of schools earnest and honest work is being done. The compulsory use of the standard lesson-book by teachers, combined with the supervision and approval of the school time-tables by the Inspector, as required by the Board's regulations, is leading (slowly, it is true, though surely) to more careful and systematic instruction in the subjects of the syllabus. And, as showing the need of this supervision and approval in the matter of school time-tables, I might mention that only a few weeks ago a time-table was sent to me for approval wherein reading and writing were to be taught during two half-hours only weekly, whilst subjects of secondary importance had treble this amount of time allotted them. The practical construction of a time-table based upon the Standard Syllabus—first, for a small country school varying in attendance from thirty to seventy-five; second, for a school varying from seventy-five to a hundred and fifty in attendance; and third, for an infants' department where objective instruction and the elements of kindergarten form the groundwork of instruction—should be considered as being fundamentally necessary for all teachers before they can hold full certificates of competency, seeing that the construction of a good time-table under given conditions is the true test of effective and thorough organization.

In districts where the preparatory classes are taught in a department by themselves a large amount of good work continues to be done. Some of the lady teachers display admirable tact in the control and management of young children. Musical drill has lately been introduced into several of the schools with marked success; and in five departments "cutting out" is systematically and effectually taught to the little ones—viz., at Ormond, Te Ongaonga, the Infants' and Hastings Street, Napier, and Waipawa. Activity and directive employment is the soul of true infant-training, and I look forward to the time when every lady teacher employed in the training of the pre-

paratory classes will be able to give instruction in musical drill and elementary kindergarten, and at the same time be a skilful manipulator in cutting out shapes and objects with a pair of scissors. I propose, as soon as an opportunity offers itself, to submit a scheme of "cutting out," covering thirty lessons, for the guidance of teachers in the junior departments, as the training of children in "hand-work and eye-work" will be of material help to them in drawing as they proceed through the standard course. In the senior division of the schools, the three chief subjects of the syllabus do not make that progress one ought to expect, considering how important they are to children after leaving school. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are of much greater value to children than all the other subjects of the syllabus, and it is unfortunate that they are so often left in the hands of junior teachers to prepare. This would not be so bad in itself were the junior teachers capable of doing their work efficiently. During the recent examination of the pupil-teachers, I took occasion to inquire as to the amount of instruction in reading each one had received during the year, and three-fourths of those examined had had no instruction whatever. The reasons for teaching children to read or write according to certain principles are altogether disregarded, the younger teachers following the plans of the teachers under whom they themselves were taught, and so school management as an art gives place to a mechanical routine. One hardly wonders why reading in so many instances lacks expression, modulation, and proper emphasis; and I fear this must continue unless more attention is paid to reading by the principal teachers during the training and preparation of their assistants. In writing, progress continues in spite of the inattention that so often characterizes the teaching of this subject. In some schools the pupils are permitted to hold their pens in any way they please, and the seating-positions at the desks are often careless in the extreme. Fortunately, each pupil in the same standard uses the same kind and number of copybook, and the whole class at the same time write a similar copy. There is no special kind of book authorised, but Vere Foster's Palmerston series and Jackson's upright handwriting are mostly in use. Of the latter I wrote favourably a year ago, and, after further experience, it appears to me that where children are taught the vertical handwriting from the preparatory classes their progress is more rapid than under the older methods. Arithmetic is taught on the whole with intelligence, but in some schools text-books are not used, and this tends to the adoption of irregular methods of instruction unless great care and watchfulness are used. In schools where text-books like the "Star Arithmetic," the "Southern Cross," or Goyen's, are adopted, the children usually acquit themselves better in the examination, and I strongly recommend the use of an arithmetic in all schools and for each standard. Mental arithmetic in the upper standards is satisfactory, and its introduction into the syllabus is doing much to quicken the intelligence of the children, and strengthen the groundwork of ordinary arithmetic as now taught. Good average results were obtained in drawing, and I think that fewer failures were recorded than in any other pass-subject. I have not demanded the standard requirements in solid geometry from country schools, as teachers cannot afford to neglect the majority of their standard pupils in order to give special instruction to one or perhaps two pupils. At Hastings, Woodville, Waipawa, Gisborne, and Kaikora, the upper-standard children had made considerable progress in solid geometry, and perhaps other of the larger schools will follow their example now that grammar has been relegated to the list of class-subjects.

I have already alluded to the results gained in class and additional subjects. The three years' science course is not so systematically carried out as one could wish, but the teachers in the majority of schools have many difficulties to cope with, and so long as the pass-subjects are well prepared one is glad to be lenient as to quantity in the less important portion of the standard work if the quality be good. At Makotuku—a bush school—practical surveying is done by the senior boys, and this useful training has lately been extended to the measurement of timber in balk. The senior children in the adjoining school at Ormondville receive special instruction in meteorology and elementary geology, and each day a log is kept by a senior pupil wherein are entered the inside and outside temperature, direction of wind, kind of clouds, and whether rain has fallen since the last entry was made. This plan has been followed for two years or more, with much apparent benefit to the children. It is to be regretted that a rain-gauge cannot be provided for a school of this sort, as the practical training of children to interest themselves in the accumulation of physical facts is truly scientific as a method, and highly beneficial as a course of instruction. Sewing continues to be taught with much success. Under the present regulations either the School Committees or the masters who have charge of schools where the average attendance does not reach seventy-five are required to make their own provision for sewing, it being assumed that lady teachers have charge of schools below that average. The rule, however, was not retrospective, and there are still several schools where the instruction is left solely in the hands of a junior female pupil-teacher. Marks were given by me for sewing in thirty-seven schools, but thirty-two only sent in specimens to the synchronous examination which is held each year at the Education Office by three committees of lady examiners. The reports of the examiners have already been issued, but it may be well to point out in brief the recommendations made by them:—Standards III. and IV.: In Standard IV. "Button-holing is not carefully worked, and more attention should be paid to neatness. Darning and knitting need greater care, and the examiners express the wish 'to see more of this description of work taught.'" Standards II.–V.: In Standard V. "whipping in frill work" does not receive sufficient care, while knitting and darning are still much neglected. Standards I.–VI.: Commendation is given to teachers for having attended to last year's recommendations, but the examiners particularly urge that "whipping in frill work" should be insisted on in the Sixth Standard. Attention is also directed to the fact that no specimen of darning and knitting were sent in by Standard VI. These suggestions and recommendations will no doubt receive from the lady teachers the attention their importance demands; but it is proper to explain on behalf of the lady teachers that knitting is not needed to comply with the standard requirements, and perhaps this will account for so few specimens being sent in to the examination.

In conclusion, I would point out that throughout the district education is prospering and progressing well. Now and again there are traces of defects and failings where one could wish otherwise, but they are exceptions to the rule, for, as a body, it may be said that the teachers employed in the Board schools are earnest and faithful in the discharge of their duties. The upper division of the Gisborne District High School continues in a healthy and prosperous condition under Mr. Mann's guidance, and in most of the school districts the Committees manifest interest in the well-being of the schools. Donations for school purposes are somewhat rare, but, to the credit of the Caledonian Society of this town, it should be recorded that the scholarships given by them for open competition to the pupils of Hawke's Bay, and the gold medal annually granted to the dux of the Sixth Standard, have greatly helped to stimulate educational effort in the larger schools of the district.

I have, &c.,
H. HILL, Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,— Blenheim, 11th January, 1892.

I have the honour to present my first annual report on the public schools of the Marlborough Education District.

At the close of the year 1890, when I entered upon my duties in this district, there were thirty-six schools in operation. Seventeen of these were "Board's" schools with an average attendance of from seventeen upwards, and nineteen were "aided" schools. At the end of the year under review the number of schools had increased to forty-three, of which number twenty-four are "aided" schools, many of which would be more correctly described as "family" schools.

The peculiar configuration of that part of the district comprised in the Sounds County renders the maintenance of this class of schools absolutely necessary unless a considerable number of children (in the aggregate) are to be permitted to grow up in total ignorance. Amongst the intricate ramifications of Queen Charlotte and Pelorus Sounds a considerable population is scattered, each family occupying a separate bay or valley, and almost completely isolated from its neighbours, as if living on a separate island, with no means of communication with each other or with the outer world except by water. In hardly any case is it possible for more than one family to assemble for school purposes in one place, for, even if the weather always permitted a safe passage from one place to another, the distances are too great, to say nothing of the attendant risks, to allow children to go by themselves, and the adult members of the family are too closely occupied with the heavy work incidental to the occupation and settlement of bush farms to spare the time that would be required to take the children to and from a distant school. I therefore still hold to the opinion I have expressed in former reports elsewhere, that, notwithstanding the objections urged against very small schools, this and other Boards are doing no more than their duty in placing within the reach of these enterprising and industrious settlers the means of providing for their children, at all events, the first rudiments of primary education.

Excepting a few cases where circumstances favourable to the inhabitants have thrown in their way the services of really capable teachers, the majority of these small schools are presided over and taught by persons whose qualifications for the office would be hardly sufficient to warrant their appointment to larger schools; or by young persons who have themselves but recently quitted the ranks of the taught to assume the office of teachers. But even in these cases the almost entire immunity which they enjoy from the greatest plague of the ordinary school-teacher—irregular attendance—enables them to accomplish what they undertake with a fair amount of success, and, on the whole, the money expended in assisting these remote settlers to provide their children with some of the benefits of our education system is perhaps as usefully employed, and will be productive of as much real permanent benefit to the commuuity, as the same amount expended in the more populous districts in unfitting a considerable portion of the rising generation for other than "genteel" occupations.

Besides the visit for examination purposes, all the Board's schools and most of the aided schools were visited for inspection during the year. On the whole my first impressions of the district were distinctly favourable. In many of the Board's schools I found the work in the hands of thoroughly qualified, earnest, energetic, and painstaking teachers, who would be able to "hold their own" in comparison with those in any other part of the colony. In a few cases I found that, either from an imperfect acquaintance with modern methods of teaching and organization, or from a deeply-rooted attachment to old-fashioned and obsolete ideas, combined sometimes with an imperfect acquaintance with some subjects of the syllabus, the children are not deriving the minimum amount of advantage from their attendance at school which their parents, the Board, and the country have a right to demand. In the tables attached to this report it will not be difficult for the Board (especially in the light of former reports) to recognise the schools referred to, and to promptly apply the only remedy.

With regard to the state of the school work generally throughout the district, I found that, from a variety of causes, the departures from the Government syllabus were considerable, the most noteworthy instances being in the subjects of history and drawing. Directly this came to my knowledge I issued a circular to teachers informing them of my intention to carry on the examination as nearly as possible in accordance with Government regulations. Notwithstanding this caution, the mean percentage of marks for history in the whole district was only 28, while drawing was, with the exception of geography, the least satisfactory of the "pass"-subjects.

* * * * * * *

The Board is no doubt fully aware of the fact, though it is too generally lost sight of, that passing the standards is not the only or by any means the chief aim of the true educator, and that

the most valuable results of earnest teaching and training—those which exercise the most beneficial influence on the future lives of the scholars who are fortunate enough to be the subjects of such training—cannot be gauged by any literary examination nor be exhibited in the most elaborate tabulated statements. I have, however, found by experience, what indeed might be expected, that the teacher who recognises to the fullest extent the serious responsibility of his office is not unfrequently as successful in the ordinary school-work as other teachers perhaps more highly gifted intellectually but with a less exalted conception of their duties. In attempting to compare one school with another by reference to the figures set forth on Table 3 [not reprinted], regard must be paid to the conditions under which they are respectively conducted, the size of the school, the number of teachers employed, the number of standard classes, the age of the scholars, the number below Standard I., and, most important, perhaps, of all, the results of the previous examination, with the number of scholars who, having failed, are again presented in the same standard. It is, for instance, somewhat misleading to say, of any school that shows a good result after a lamentable breakdown at the previous examination, that "a great improvement is manifest" unless it can be shown that all or most of those who failed the year before have still been advanced to the next higher standard. At the beginning of 1891, when, for reasons known to the Board, it was resolved to postpone the examination to the end of the year, I addressed a circular to all the teachers recommending them to promote to higher standards such scholars as they believed would have passed if the examination had taken place as usual at the beginning of the year. I have endeavoured to ascertain how far this recommendation was adopted; and the following are, as far as I know, the numbers so promoted in the schools named:—

	Presented.	Promoted.	Percentage.
Blenheim Boys' and Juniors' ...	237	198	84 per cent.
Blenheim Girls'	165	119	73 "
Picton	103	27	20 "
Havelock	61	24	39 "
Renwick	59	6	10 "
Spring Creek	23	23	100 "
Kaituna	19	1	51 "
Canvastown	24	9	37 "
Grovetown	63	13	21 "
Waitohi	62	36	58 "
Fairhall	42	11	26 "
Okaramio	30	30	100 "
Springlands	54	26	48 "
Tuamarina	54	25	46 "

The Board's schools not included in the above list retained all their scholars in the standards they were working in at the beginning of the year. Since the promotion of scholars without examination was entirely optional, and was to be confined to those scholars only who were considered by their teachers to be prepared to pass the standard in which they had been taught for a whole year, the fact of some unsuccessful schools having promoted the whole or a large number of their scholars constitutes a very slight palliation of their shortcomings, since it betrays a lamentable want of judgment, or a culpable ignorance of the actual condition of their schools. It is, however, only fair to point out that at the schools earliest examined the promoted scholars had been not more than nine months in their respective standard classes.

From Table 4 [not reprinted] it will be seen that the reading throughout the district is decidedly good; and doubtless the trenchant criticism of this subject in the last report of my predecessor has had the effect of directing more attention to this very important item of the syllabus.

Writing and spelling occupy the second and third places respectively in the order of merit, and may be called satisfactory, the tests employed in the latter subject being tolerably severe. During my inspection visits I generally take the opportunity of examining the exercise-books and copy-books, and at the principal school in the district I was far from satisfied with their condition, and criticized severely the quality of the writing in my inspection report. I am glad to be able to say that a most satisfactory improvement has since been effected, and I hope will be maintained in this portion of the school work.

Geography occupies the lowest place in the list of pass-subjects, the mapping throughout the district being generally inferior and sometimes execrable. I have noticed elsewhere that this subject has been generally less satisfactory since it was made a "class"-subject in Standards II. and IV., and possibly this may be something more than a mere coincidence. I am not prepared to state that the two facts stand in the relation of cause and effect, but a perfunctory treatment of the subject in Standard IV. would certainly militate against a satisfactory proficiency in the higher standards.

In arithmetic the percentage of passes can scarcely be considered satisfactory when the amount of time usually devoted to this subject is taken into account. In the Fourth Standard I was surprised how very few scholars attempted the "bill" which they were required to make out, and of these only a small minority were successful in obtaining the correct total. Considering the practical importance of this part of the work, especially in the case of boys and in the "Standard of exemption," it is to be regretted that more attention is not paid to it; and, in order to bring about an improvement in this respect, I intend in the future to make it compulsory to attempt this question. In the First and Second Standards the questions bearing on the aliquot parts of the current coins and the relative length of the yard, &c., were pretty generally avoided altogether. This also it will not be safe to do in future.

The measure of success achieved in grammar and composition was largely due to the latter, which was fairly well done at most of the Board's schools—the formal grammar reducing the

percentage to the amount recorded. Judging from past experience, I have no doubt that some teachers will find the relegation of formal grammer to the list of "class"-subjects a very great relief: whether it will be so to the true educationist is quite another affair,

Speaking generally, I find a tendency in teachers of small schools to pay too little attention to Standard I. and the preparatory classes. I am sure this is a mistake on many grounds. It is, to begin with, unfair to let so large a proportion (often half or more) of the scholars suffer for the benefit of the few in the upper classes: and moreover it is against the true interest of the teacher himself, whose success with the higher classes will be in direct proportion to the amount of care he has bestowed upon them in the lower ranks of the school. In the preparatory classes, that most useful table the addition table seems almost unknown, but it should certainly be thoroughly mastered before the multiplication table is thought of. It is the disuse of this important aid that causes the mischievous practice of counting with the fingers or by strokes on the slate to take the place of addition, up to the Second or even the Third Standard.

Only three of the Board's schools receive 50 per cent. (or upwards) of the possible marks for class-subjects. This may not be regarded as very satisfactory, but with three exceptions all the schools are small, with either one or two teachers; and I am not inclined to blame those who have in other respects been fairly successful for a weakness in one or two class-subjects. Of these subjects, elementary science and object-lessons were the most, and history the least, satisfactory. Some of the "additional" subjects appear to receive a fair amount of attention, though the recitation is decidedly poor throughout the district, with the exception of two or three of the largest schools. The number of pieces contained in the several reading-books suitable for recitation is not very great, but there is still some room for the display of taste and judgment in the selection, and in this respect I have often been disappointed. In the preparatory classes, where there is room for a considerable amount of recitation or repetition, and where, if carefully taught, it is so effective, it is in most schools limited to the few and inferior pieces to be found in the lower reading-books. At Picton the preparatory classes were exceptionally well trained in this respect, and I am sure the trouble taken will be amply repaid to the teacher in the next standard. In the higher classes the sense and beauty of some of the pieces are often marred not only by bad intonation, monotonous sing-song, or lack of expression, but by an invariable pause at the end of every line, which frequently obscures or destroys the meaning, when it does not make utter nonsense, of the verse.

Military drill is not attempted at any schools excepting Blenheim and Tuamarina, and at both of them very considerable proficiency has been attained—indeed, at the last-named the whole atmosphere is decidedly military throughout—and reacts upon the general order and discipline of the school. Class-drill is sufficiently attended to at the larger Board schools, but not at the smaller or at the aided schools.

Singing is taught at Blenheim Boys' and Girls' Schools by note, and some rudimentary knowledge of the theory is imparted to the scholars. Fairhill, Cullensville, and Marshlands also received marks to indicate a praiseworthy attempt to include this subject in the school course. In all these cases the old notation is used. There is very little doubt that to teach children to sing at sight the tonic sol-fa system is the most effective and the easiest method. On the other hand, what little knowledge of the theory they may pick up under the old system is always available in after years to assist them in mastering any instrument they wish to play, for which purpose the tonic sol-fa ystem would be comparatively useless.

Needlework receives attention at most of the schools having female teachers, but, as a rule, is not as well taught as it should be. The time begrudgingly allotted to this subject in some schools is barely sufficient for the purpose, and yet perhaps as much as a due regard for the claims of the other thirteen subjects of the syllabus will allow.

In many of the schools the intelligence of the children in the three lower standards, as tested by questions on the subject-matter of the reading-lesson, was in some respects the most promising and satisfactory feature of the examination, and made me sigh for the good time coming when the individual examination shall be a thing of the past, and the Inspector will be at liberty to estimate the value of the school work by the evidence of intellectual activity that he may succeed in eliciting from the several classes. The children in the Blenheim Boys', Renwick, Kaituna, Grovetown, Hawksbury, and Robin Hood Bay were particularly bright and intelligent in their replies, and about a third of the schools gave evidence of careful training in this direction.

Extra drawing, which has now disappeared from the list of additional subjects, was exhibited at one school only—Fairhall—and was very creditable, especially when the general proficiency of the scholars throughout the school was satisfactory evidence that nothing else had suffered through the enthusiasm of the teacher for one particular portion of the syllabus.

By the latest edition of the regulations (the fifth, if I am not mistaken) it is declared that the neglect of any one of the class-subjects in any school will be regarded as "highly censurable." Two schools that I consider among the best in the district, and equal in real educative power to any I have seen, will come under the ban of the department next year unless they mend their ways before the examination.

Blenheim Schools.—The fact that these schools contain 25 per cent. of the whole roll-number in the district would alone warrant special prominence being given to them in this report, but, unfortunately, another reason for such prominence may be discerned by reference to Table 3. For the first time for some years the boys and girls of these schools were examined in the same rooms, from the same papers, and under exactly the same conditions, but a glance at Table 3 will show with what widely different results. The total number of scholars presented was the same in both—namely, 165. Of these, eleven boys and twenty-seven girls were absent, and five boys and eleven girls were "excepted." With these deductions there remained 146 boys and 120 girls to pass or fail, the result being the failure of six boys and fifty-one girls, or 4 per cent. of the boys and 42 per cent. of the girls. Not only are the girls far behind the boys as regards educational attainments, but the

work that was done was in many cases written and arranged in a careless and slovenly manner. It was also clearly apparent that the conditions under which they were being examined were not favourable to their usual modes of working, the demeanour of the girls during the examination showing a marked contrast to that of the boys. The latter, as soon as the papers were given out, settled down at once to their work in perfect silence, looking to neither one side nor the other. The girls, on the contrary, were gazing about in all directions, and a constant buzz of whispering was with difficulty repressed, but not until I had called them to order with threats of dismissal. Notwithstanding, moreover, that the scholars were arranged in such a manner as to reduce to a minimum the opportunities of copying and prompting, there were amongst the lower classes of girls several pairs of papers bearing a very suspicious resemblance, some being word for word the same, and containing the same errors and absurdities. From the foregoing statement it will be evident that there must be something radically wrong in the girls' department, either in the teaching, in the management, or in both. I am inclined to believe that the chief cause of failure is due less to inferior teaching than to a weaker government and imperfect organization; and I am informed that the teacher's *bête noire*, irregular attendance, is particularly rampant in this department of the Blenheim School.

The whole of the arrangements of the Blenheim School are, in my opinion, most unsatisfactory. Under one roof we have a headmaster, the most of whose time is occupied in teaching about fifty boys with the assistance of a pupil-teacher; and in an adjoining room the headmistress is engaged in exactly the same work with fifty girls. These were the numbers at the date of the examination, but doubtless at the beginning of the year there were many more. In the lower standards the same wasteful duplex system exists. Apart altogether from the economical aspect of the case (though that is by no means to be disregarded in a small, and consequently poor, district like this) the separation of the sexes in public schools is, I believe, a grave mistake, and absolutely useless for the cause supposed to be served. They really are no more separated under the existing plan than they would be in a well-managed mixed school. They meet together on their way to and from school, and during the midday recess, and (owing to faulty arrangement) even in the playground, and are only really separated when in the building, which they would also be, practically, in a properly-conducted mixed school, where the girls enter from their own playground by their own door, and sit on one side of the schoolroom, whilst the boys occupy seats at the other side. Whilst in the room they are always under the eye of the teacher. In most moderately large schools in the colony (with the exception of the Nelson District), and, of necessity, in all country schools, the boys and the girls are taught together, and the advantages to the scholars are many and well recognised. A healthy spirit of emulation is evoked, which acts on both boys and girls, and often shows that the latter, when sharing the same advantages, can generally equal and frequently surpass the boys in most of the subjects of an elementary school course. The presence of the girls also exercises a restraining and humanising influence over the generality of boys, and renders it possible to preserve the highest discipline, with the minimum of severity. After seventeen years' experience amongst mixed schools both as a parent of boys and girls attending them and in my official capacity, I am convinced that under a proper system of management the girls are largely benefited by being taught and trained under the same conditions as the boys. An acknowledged authority on educational matters says, "Ere long I hope it will be admitted even by the most refined of parents that, *with reasonable care as to the associations which their daughters form out of school*, they may, not only without risk, but with great advantage, permit them to share all the advantage of good public day-schools; and need feel no greater misgivings as to the result of association for school purposes than they do in respect to their meeting together on Sunday in some place of worship." Although Dr. Fitch is speaking more particularly of public schools for girls, I am convinced that, with the important proviso which I have italicised, the same argument applies to mixed schools, whilst without it no such flimsy precautions as separating them from their brothers in school will avail to avert the deplorable results of careless or insufficient parental control.

With regard to the head teacher of the Blenheim Girls' School, I have no doubt that she is fully qualified intellectually for her important position; but the very best teaching is comparatively wasted unless supported by good discipline. It must, moreover, be admitted that—other qualifications being equal—men are as a rule better teachers of large public schools than women. At nearly all the high schools for girls the most important part of the teaching is placed in the hands of visiting masters, and it is no disparagement to the mistress of the Girls' School to express my belief that under the mixed system, and subject to the discipline and tuition of the headmaster, a greater intellectual activity would be aroused amongst the girls, whilst a more independent and therefore honest performance of their school duties would be the certain result of a firmer discipline and more vigorous and vigilant supervision. On the foregoing ground I trust that the Board and the Committee will take the matter into their most serious consideration, with the view of placing the school on a satisfactory footing.

Before leaving the subject of the Blenheim School I must express my dissatisfaction with the building occupied by the junior division. It is simply disgraceful that a town like this should be compelled to crowd its little ones into the very inconvenient, ill-constructed, unventilated and yet draughty, congeries of wooden sheds which is at present used as an infant-school. A new building is urgently needed, and, looking at the large proportion of the scholars in the Marlborough District to be provided for at this school, I consider that the Board would be justified in taking steps for the immediate erection of a suitable infant-school without delay.

* * * * * * *

SCHOOL-BUILDINGS.—The gradual growth of the population of this district has left its record most unfavourably upon many of the school-buildings, which from very humble beginnings have advanced by successive additions until they have attained their present dimensions. The inevitable result has been to leave them with scarcely any of the recognised characteristics of good school-

buildings, being almost of necessity badly lighted and awkwardly constructed. The schools at Grovetown, Fairhall, Renwick, and Marlboroughtown are all in this category. The furniture of the last-named school is the worst I have ever seen in a Board school, and should be replaced at once (it is very old) with properly-constructed desks.

I was somewhat surprised, when I became familiar with the topography of the district, to find how thickly schools had been planted in certain localities. If, for instance, a circle with a four-mile radius be drawn from the Blenheim School as a centre, it would include Springlands, Grovetown, Fairhall, Marlboroughtown, and Spring Creek. The disadvantages arising from a too close proximity of schools are many. Among them are (1) additional cost, (2) diminished efficiency, and (3)—perhaps the most mischievous of all—the facility with which children can be moved from one school to another as often as the caprice of parents may desire. No doubt, at the time these schools were first established, the grouping of the settlers and the imperfect means of communication may have appeared to justify their proximity; but, with the improved roads and other facilities, such necessity no longer exists, and I hope that, when it becomes necessary (as it soon will) to rebuild the Grovetown School, the Board will seriously consider whether by removing it a little further away from Blenheim the Marlboroughtown School might not be advantageously abolished. The evidence in favour of the superior efficiency and economy of large schools is overwhelming, and, if the extra distance should cause a few children to postpone the commencement of their school life for a year or more, they would, I believe, lose no time, but really be great gainers in the long-run.

Another locality where schools are too plentifully distributed is in the Kaituna district, where within a distance of twelve miles along a good road there are as many as four schools. Any attempt to remedy this state of affairs will no doubt meet with violent opposition, for, unfortunately, many persons, though professedly objecting on account of the distance that children would have to walk, are—I dare say, sometimes unconsciously—influenced by other motives, such as a desire to utilise the services of their children, or from a disinclination for the extra effort that would be required to get them ready for school in the morning. It is absurd to say that healthy children of seven or eight years old cannot walk three miles to school along a good road, when if kept at home they would certainly be on their feet the whole day, and probably the elder ones would be assisting in some kind of laborious work, and this would be equivalent to more than twice as much real bodily fatigue as would be undergone on a journey to and from school. As before remarked, many of the conditions which led to schools being so closely situated are now changed. Roads are good and are fenced in, bridges and culverts have been thrown over creeks and watercourses, stray cattle are almost unknown, and companions for the journey are plentiful; yet, having been so long accustomed to have schools almost at their doors, there is little hope of convincing these communities of the necessity for any change. I am glad, therefore, that the Board has taken a firm stand and has resolved to remove the Okaramio School to a more central position between Havelock Suburban and Kaituna. The configuration of the country and the prevailing industrial pursuits of the inhabitants are unfavourable to the growth of large centres of population where profitable schools could be looked for in the course of time; but the same circumstances are certain to be productive of numerous straggling village settlements, which will have to be provided for, so that every year will call for greater circumspection in fixing upon sites for new schools, and in doing so the convenience of the first settlers in a new locality should not be allowed to thrust out of sight the probable requirements of later arrivals.

Irregularity of Attendance.—This trusty ally of the incompetent teacher—always ready to create a diversion in his favour when threatened by hostile parents, Committees, Board, or Inspector—is the inveterate enemy of the skilful and efficient one, and does much to render futile his most strenuous exertions. There are, doubtless, times and seasons in every locality when there is a plausible excuse for the absence of the elder children for a few weeks, and what with the harvest, potato-gathering, &c., the teachers in this district perhaps have as fair a ground of complaint as any in the colony; but there is a limit to the legitimate demands of these busy seasons, and it may not unreasonably be asked what is the cause of the regular irregularity throughout the year, of which we are constantly reminded. Or is there actually more irregularity of attendance now than there was in past years? On the contrary, I believe it might be proved that the average attendance at the present day is considerably higher than it was twenty years ago. But now there is no time to spare even with the fullest attendance to accomplish the work demanded in the year. As to the cause, the highest authorities on educational matters maintain that irregularity of attendance is too often the result of defective management and weak government, and that an incompetent or careless teacher is sure to have a poor and irregular attendance; the idea which prevails in the minds of the parents and scholars often finding expression in such remarks as "Oh, they won't lose much by stopping away for a few days!" It cannot, however, be denied that much of this irregularity is due to the indifference, folly, or greed of parents or guardians. Unfortunately, even in this favoured land there are some who are compelled by straitened circumstances to utilise the labour of their children as much as possible, and for these no reproach, but rather our fullest sympathy, is needed. These, however, must surely be exceptional cases, and it is to be regretted that some more practical method than that provided in the Act for punishing really culpable parents cannot be discovered. I venture to offer a suggestion for the consideration of the Government if ever a change should be determined upon in this direction. Whenever a child shall have failed to attend school for the number of days required by the statute, instead of a money fine let the punishment of the parent or guardian be disfranchisement for a certain time—to be extended or increased upon future repetition of the offence; for a person who is so blind or so indifferent to the just rights of his own flesh and blood is not likely to take a more intelligent interest in other matters affecting the welfare of his fellow-countrymen. By this method no tedious, cumbersome, uncertain, and dilatory law proceedings would be necessary: no just complaint could be set aside because of a technical irregularity or a legal quibble. It would simply be the duty of the Inspector after each annual

examination to forward to the Registrar of the district the names of any parents or guardians whose children had not been present at half the school meetings during the year (unless the absence was caused through illness), and it should then be the duty of the Registrar to strike off the electoral roll the names of such persons. The best remedy for irregularity of attendance, however, is to be found in making the school attractive to the scholars; for if once their sympathies can be enlisted in the cause they will evince so strong a disinclination to stay away from school that few parents would be willing to compel them to do so: this, and the exercise of tact and discretion by the teacher in his intercourse with parents who are disposed to be careless on this point, will go far to remove this vexatious obstacle to progress from the skilful teacher's path.

Playground Supervision.—This is a matter that is very properly regarded by the Department as of the first importance, and it is made one of the special topics of the "Inspection Report." It is, indeed, a subject which deserves far more attention than it generally receives. Some, and not unfrequently very good teachers in other respects, seem to consider that they have no concern with their scholars excepting when they are before them in class. There can scarcely be a greater mistake than this if the outcome of our education system is not to be what its enemies predict, the production of a nation of clever rogues and "larrikins." The exclusion of all kinds of religious teaching from our schools renders it the more necessary (in the eyes of an earnest and conscientious teacher) to make use of every legitimate means of inculcating at least the morality of pure religion, and checking the first indications of selfishness, meanness, greediness, or petty tyranny, and other childish manifestations of the inherent tendency to self-seeking which is at the root of all vice and crime. No better opportunity for doing this can be found than that which can be made by the observant and sympathetic teacher out of the sports, pastimes, and disputes of the playground, and that, too, without undue interference with the rational amount of liberty without which the term "playground" would be an obvious misnomer.

"But how, in the name of common-sense," some bewildered teacher of a small school may say, "can I do anything of the kind? I have seven different classes to teach without assistance, and fourteen different subjects to teach them in twenty-five hours a week. During the recess I am employed in examining exercise-books, and cannot find a moment to spare in the playground." All this may be perfectly true; but if your heart is in your work—if you are not teaching a school because there is no other way in which you can get a comfortable living, but because you have deliberately chosen it as the vocation most congenial to your nature,—then, no matter how embarrassing your task may be, you will find some way of performing this most important duty even by sacrificing a portion of what you may have regarded as your leisure hours. A really conscientious teacher has no leisure hours as long as anything is undone.

It is a common remark of persons engaged in laborious occupations, mechanical pursuits, or in business offices, &c., with regard to teachers, "Oh, they have jolly fine times! Only five hours a day for five days a week, besides any amount of holidays; while I have to work eight hours at least for six days and no holidays." Every teacher's own conscience will tell him to what extent this is true in his own case; and it *is* true of all teachers who enter the school just at the time it opens, and put on their hats (or bonnets) and walk away as the clock strikes the hour for closing, thinking no more about the children under their charge than if they were so many sheep, until the next opening of the school, and who, in short, perform their duties in a half-hearted and perfunctory manner; but to the truly qualified teacher (not necessarily with any of the letters of the alphabet after his name) the remarks of our laborious friend are wholly inapplicable. The few hours a day during which the children are bodily present with him represent but a portion of the time which he is devoting to their service, and, to say nothing of the innumerable worries, petty annoyances, and vexatious interference of parents, &c., to which he is daily and hourly exposed, the lot of the mechanic, merchant's clerk, or labourer is far easier and too often far better remunerated than that of the not wholly ideal teacher of whom I am speaking.

If, however, supervision in recess is not an easy matter in a small school, it should be attended by no difficulty in large ones. Yet in this respect the Blenheim School is very unsatisfactory, owing partly, I believe, to the mistaken system of dual control. There cannot be two captains to one ship, nor two *head* teachers under one roof if the best possible discipline and order are to be expected. I hold that the head teacher of any school should have entire control over every other teacher in the school, and should be at liberty—nay, it should be his duty—to direct the services of his subordinates to any part of the school work to which he considers them most fitted; and under such circumstances nothing would be more easier than to tell-off the staff, two at a time (by rotation), to remain on the school premises during the mid-day recess—not sitting down comfortably reading a novel or doing fancy-work, nor even engaged in private study, but moving constantly about the playground or any parts of the building where children are allowed to remain, and watching over their conduct with scrupulous and unceasing vigilance. This would be work indeed, and perhaps hard work, but in a school with a staff of ten or upwards no teacher would as a rule take this duty more than once a week, and that ought not to be regarded as a hardship by any of the staff. Whether or not, some such arrangement must be made without delay and rigidly adhered to, and I hope the Board will take such steps as it may deem fit to enforce it at once.

School Libraries.—These useful, almost necessary, adjuncts to a good school are not numerous in this district. I think the Board should endeavour to rouse an interest in this matter by bringing again under the notice of Committees the provision of clause 57 of the Act, which many may have forgotten or overlooked. Anything that will encourage a taste for reading amongst our young people may well be regarded as a fitting object for the attention of the Board and for assistance from its funds, and this was recognised and wisely provided for by the Legislature when framing the Act of 1877. There are good libraries at Canvastown and Picton. That the principal school in the district should be destitute of this invaluable auxiliary is not very creditable to the district, and I trust that the reproach will ere long be removed.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Board of Education, Marlborough. John Smith, Inspector.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. m.
Above Standard VI. ...	16	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	91	9	3	16	63	14 3
" V.	114	9	6	34	65	13 2
" IV.	221	14	10	50	147	12 8
" III.	277	21	12	65	179	11 8
" II.	276	10	13	46	207	10 7
" I.	270	11	8	31	220	9 4
Preparatory	737	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	2,002	74	52	242	881	11 11*

* Mean of average age.

NELSON.

SIR,— 6th January, 1892.

I have the honour to lay before you my report on the Nelson public schools for the year 1891. The number of schools at the close of the year was ninety-three, ninety of which have been examined; eighty have also been paid separate visits of inspection; 5,769 names were on the rolls of the schools when they were examined, 5,469 scholars being present. The total number of scholars attending the Nelson schools at the close of the December quarter was 5,828.

The outcome of my examination was, on the whole, satisfactory, though the number of schools where the children acquitted themselves badly (twelve) is larger than it ought to be. It is only fair to state, however, that extenuating circumstances existed which remove all blame from the teachers in four instances. For the remaining eight little or no excuse was discoverable. Several teachers whose schools have done badly have resigned; others have been warned by the Board that a substantial improvement will be expected next year.

In more than one previous report I have taken occasion to refer in favourable terms to the excellent discipline maintained in the large majority of our schools, and to the good behaviour of the children. I have seen nothing since that should induce me to modify this favourable opinion. The improved methods of treating their scholars now generally adopted by teachers are also a fair subject for congratulation. The loud, harsh tones in which it was customary to address a class a few years ago are now seldom heard. It is recognised that a moderately-pitched tone of voice is quite as effective in securing the attention of even a large class as the old-fashioned practice of bawling as though the children were all deaf. The notion, too, formerly so prevalent, that a slip due to carelessness, or, it might be, to want of wits, should be visited, as a matter of course, with sharp and summary corporal punishment, is gradually dying out—though it dies hard. Corporal punishment, indeed, of any kind is now usually, and rightly, reserved for extreme cases of insubordination, bullying, and the other meaner vices. In many instances, especially in our smaller schools, it is being dispensed with altogether. I hold these matters to be of the highest importance, largely affecting, as they do, the tone and temper of so many thousands of children. Much has been gained when the unchecked and, indeed, almost unheeded tyranny that saddened school-life not so many years ago, is condemned both by public opinion and by the improved feeling of the teachers themselves, and that this change has been effected without any noticeable relaxation of discipline.

Being conscious that a report which deals only with generalities is both uninteresting and of slight practical value, I again give a short criticism of the way in which the principal subjects included in the syllabus are being taught.

READING has improved, and is still improving. There is, indeed, but little to be desired in the reading of our older scholars, more especially in that of the girls, so far as fluency and correct intonation go. The graces of finished reading need hardly be looked for, and assuredly will not often be found either in the upper classes of elementary schools or, it may be added, of high schools and colleges. Simultaneous reading, it is satisfactory to find, now generally takes that merely subordinate place to which alone it was ever entitled.

WRITING.—Great pains have evidently been taken, as the results show, to remove from this district the reproach of slovenly handwriting; but, though the general level has undoubtedly been raised, the gap between our best and our worst schools in this respect is still far too wide. Neat and well-arranged paper-work is certainly more common than it was a few years ago, though the want of previous preparation is still manifest in some of our smaller schools. The lack of foolscap for practice is usually alleged in extenuation of any deficiencies of this kind; but the plea, if well founded, is hardly creditable to those with whom the supply of so inexpensive an article as paper rests. Little weight should be attached to the not infrequent criticism that our scholars do not take away with them from school a current, businesslike style of penmanship. Those who really know anything about the matter are fully aware that this is a plant of later growth, produced only by long practice. A tolerably close approximation to the somewhat stiff and formal style of the copy-heads is all that can be expected from the average scholar. Speed and freedom will follow in due time.

RECITATION.—Unless this subject be better taught than it is at present, and unless a better selection of pieces to be committed to memory be made, it would be just as well if recitation were suffered to drop quietly out of our school-course. After enduring patiently much execrable recitation for many years, I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that a large proportion of our teachers can neither recite decently themselves, nor, as a natural consequence, teach others. The unaccentuated gabble that not only passes muster, but is listened to by teachers with complacency, on both inspection and examination days, is most disheartening. The extenuating plea that fully half of the pieces included in the reading-books as poetry do not rise to the level of even decent verse, avails but little when the majority of the verses chosen by the teachers themselves for the children are taken from the pure doggerel that still finds a large place even in our most modern reading-books. "The Two Crossing-sweepers" and "Little Jim" evidently possess a strange fascination for some members of a class that presumably has a certain tincture of letters.

GRAMMAR.—Judged by the performances of even our most advanced scholars, their teachers would appear to have come to the conclusion somewhat unanimously that formal grammar is of comparatively slight practical importance, and may therefore be almost entirely disregarded. Two examples will serve to show what I mean. Not one out of every four candidates for the Fifth Standard could answer with any approach to accuracy the following question: "How do you distinguish the active from the passive voice? Write two sentences exemplifying the use of each voice." Three out of four of the Sixth Standard candidates were quite unable to comply with the demand for "three sentences, containing respectively an intransitive, an impersonal, and a frequentative verb." (The third portion of this question was indeed withdrawn towards the close of my examinations, as being hopelessly out of reach.)

SPELLING.—The unacquaintance with words in daily use—even as exhibited by the most forward scholars—of which I complained in last year's report, was more glaringly shown this year by my substituting extracts from newspapers of the day for passages from popular authors. Not only was a large proportion of our brightest scholars quite at sea as to the meaning of such words as "surplus," "deficit," and "finance," but these words were miserably misspelt, even after the meaning of each had been carefully explained beforehand by the examiner. There would seem to be something grievously unpractical in a system that lands our best scholars in such a slough of incompetence as this. No one looks for perfect specimens of English prose in the hastily-penned columns of a daily paper, but a large proportion of the every-day reading of every one but a hermit must nowadays be gotten from our newspapers, and he who persistently neglects what has been aptly termed "history in the making" does so at his own imminent peril. To sum up the matter on lower but very intelligible practical grounds, the boy who (in this district at least) never opens a newspaper will probably be plucked for bad spelling. Every possible device should be resorted to in order to extend the very limited vocabulary of our children, for a scholar can scarcely be expected to spell aright a word that he has hardly ever met with, and as to the meaning of which he can but make a guess. It must, though, be admitted that it is no easy task for an examiner to determine how far the failure of a scholar to explain, however crudely, the meaning of a word arises from pure ignorance, and how far from lack of power of expression.

ARITHMETIC continues to receive quite as much attention as it is entitled to. My observation of the teachers' methods of teaching arithmetic has led me to conclude that, as a rule, they explain thoroughly a subject that they thoroughly understand, and that our children, on leaving school, do, for the most part, carry away with them such a sound knowledge of this art as ought, in after-years, to serve them in good stead.

ELEMENTARY SCIENCE (the text-book used being Paul Bert's well-known manual) is a most popular study, and is taught in a most satisfactory fashion.

The plan of teaching GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY concurrently, recommended in my last report as being both a saving of time and a help to both of these kindred subjects, has been adopted in several schools in the case of the upper classes.

DRAWING, on the whole, is fairly well taught, having regard to the comparatively limited portion of the school-day that can be spared for this subject without unduly trenching upon such indispensable matters as reading or writing.

How our teachers will fare under the enormously-increased demands of the new syllabus—which appears to be framed upon the town-bred assumption that the majority of our children are to spend much of their future lives in handling pencil and compasses, instead of axe and spade—it is not difficult to predict. Either they will conscientiously strive to carry out the programme in its entirety, to the certain neglect of the more practical portions of an elementary education—a course that no Inspector will tolerate—or they will teach just as much drawing as can be compassed within the hour and a half, or two hours at the utmost, that can be wedged into any time-table drawn up with a due sense of proportion.

I subjoin the usual brief summary of my opinion of the general state of each school at the date of my last examination. [Not reprinted.]

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson. W. C. HODGSON.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. m.
Above Standard VI.	133	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	369	11	2	41	315	14 4
" V.	534	20	16	73	425	12 10
" IV.	731	20	23	110	578	12 4
" III.	715	19	27	43	626	11 0
" II.	768	19	12	34	703	10 0
" I.	684	14	5	27	638	8 10
Preparatory	1,835	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	5,769	103	85	328	3,285	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

GREY.

SIR,— Education Office, Greymouth, 19th February, 1892.

I have the honour to present my report upon the examination for 1891.

Twenty schools were examined. The following table gives information as to numbers presented, passes, &c. :—

. . . —	1890.	1891.
Roll-number on day of examination	1,729	1,670
Number of above already passed standard course	26	28
Number within standard classification	1,161	1,079
Number enrolled in standard classes present at examination ...	1,080	990
Number promoted to a higher standard	912	843
Percentage of class-subjects—		
History	49·1	46
Geography	44·7	43
Elementary science and object-lessons	64·3	69
Mean percentage	59·3	53
Average for additional subjects (possible total, 20)—		
Recitation	14·5	15·3
Drill and exercises	15	13
Singing	16·8	17·6
Needlework	17·4	15·5
Subject-matter	...	12·5
Mean average	15·9	14·8

On the whole, the results may be considered satisfactory; though the average percentage of passes in the seven pass-subjects is 78·3, as compared with 85·4 for 1890; for 1889 the average percentage was 76·8; and for 1888, 80·6. Taking into consideration all the circumstances beyond the control of teachers, the result must not be taken as indicating any diminution of effort or efficiency. Taking the percentage of failures as representing approximately the condition of a school, the results are as follows: Less than 10 per cent. of failures, nine schools; over 10 and less than 20 per cent., four schools; 20 to 25 per cent., four schools; three schools respectively 36, 43, and 55 per cent. The average percentage of scholars passing is 51·1, and of failures 15·5. Percentages must not, however, be accepted as infallible guides as to state of efficiency or otherwise. A careful analysis of the work of each school furnishes plenty of material for consideration and comment; and it is not going too far to say that a school having 0 per cent. of failures may be less sound in respect of real education than one having 20 per cent. Irregular attendance is a factor to be considered. There are various causes for this, the principal in this district being bad weather, but want of confidence in the teacher has sometimes an influence.

The experience of the last few years has fully convinced me of the superiority of our young female teachers, trained in the district, in the management of small country schools, to those male teachers who have been engaged from outside. The first are more attentive to their duties and less eager for change, and the improvement they have effected in some of our small schools has been very pronounced. This is no doubt owing materially to the excellent training these young teachers receive in the early stages from the head mistress of the Greymouth School.

READING.—This subject still shows improvement, the number of good readers steadily increasing. Chambers's cards are used with good effect in the infant classes; and the excellent books for Standards

I. and II. belonging to Longmans' series are read with appreciation and interest, the result in those classes being generally very good. In Standards III. to VI. a mistake in pronunciation seldom occurred, and in many cases the result of questioning upon the subject-matter was very satisfactory. Defects in style and expression are still to be remedied, passages which give opportunity for the expression of the various emotions being too often read monotonously. This, I believe, often results from nervousness or diffidence on the part of the scholar. The extension of the practice of illustrative reading by the teacher would be productive of good. I would again recommend the encouragement of class criticism in connection with emphasis and style. Recitation, which should be a valuable aid to the reading, is generally made mere memory-work: though there is certainly a process of improvement going on, it is extremely slow. It is often too evident that the scholars know little of the spirit and meaning of the lines they repeat.

Writing.—Since the introduction of the "New Zealand" and "Southern Cross" copybooks this subject has steadily improved. A more scientific treatment of the subject is also apparent, blackboard lessons being given more frequently. In the writing of the special passages given for results there is seldom much fault to be found, but in the papers for other subjects careless writing is too often exhibited. It may be as well for teachers to know that where this discrepancy is found to exist a fine is inflicted varying from five to ten marks. The schools in which the writing was notably deficient corresponded with those in which my injunction that Standards II. and III. should not be allowed to write excepting between lines had been disregarded.

Arithmetic.—Though showing a falling-off in percentage of passes, the work is generally well done. Carelessness in the reading of the questions set is responsible for many errors, and scholars are too easily tripped by a slight deviation from the straightforward fashion of putting a question. In Standards II. and III. this is often noticeable in subtraction, it being a common occurrence to find scholars attempting to take the greater quantity from the lesser. The processes of working are often unnecessarily cumbrous. In the working of problems the wrong rules are often applied, this resulting, I believe, more from careless reading of the question than from want of knowledge. In Standard IV. want of knowledge of tables was sometimes noticeable in the working of reduction. Standards V. and VI. did very good work, but in all classes I should like to see problems more often attempted.

Dictation and Spelling.—The results are extremely good. My practice is to allow the teachers to read the paragraph for dictation, and give out the words for spelling. In one or two cases I noticed a tendency to abuse this concession by giving a pronounced hint concerning punctuation.

Grammar and Composition.—This subject shows considerable falling-off from the standards of 1890, and in no subject is there so much variation. Some schools do very good work throughout, composition being excellently done. In others all branches of the subject show great weakness. Where analysis has been introduced at an earlier stage than is prescribed by the regulations, the good effect is clearly apparent. The imperfections in composition are still too numerous—the omission of capital letters where required and introduction where unnecessary, the absence of punctuation, mistakes in spelling, the use of altogether irrelevant words, obscurity of expression, and bad writing. Leaving out about six of the schools, the remainder are open to the charge of imperfection in this subject. Many failures have only just been prevented by the work in grammar. The new regulations will operate beneficially in this respect, grammar becoming a class-subject in all classes excepting the Fourth.

Geography.—In the majority of the schools the maps from memory were very well done. Physical and mathematical geography are still poorly done in Standards V. and VI. The teaching of local geography is considerably neglected. Very little effort appears to be made to render this subject interesting. The connection of places with historical events, the productions of a country and its commerce, the narratives of travellers, may all be made useful auxiliaries in geographical teaching, and give life to a lesson such as cannot exist in a bare enumeration of places with their positions.

Drawing.—This subject still shows fair results. Our young teachers not having the advantages enjoyed in larger districts in the matters of instruction and training, we can hardly expect results equal to those obtained elsewhere; but the subject is very fairly taught, and in a few schools some very good extra work is produced.

In class-subjects, history and geography show a slight falling-off. Improvement is perceptible in elementary science and object-lessons.

In additional subjects, recitation, singing, and subject-matter show improvement; drill and needlework a small diminution of efficiency.

In the matters of discipline and behaviour there is seldom cause for complaint; a crowded condition of the schoolroom being generally answerable for such slight deficiencies as are discoverable. Pleasant features are the eagerness of the scholars to be present on the day of examination, their clean and tidy appearance, and the wholesome and cleanly condition of the schoolroom, the latter being often tastefully decorated with ferns and flowers.

The class for higher subjects at the Greymouth District High School is still progressing satisfactorily. Three scholars matriculated, and one passed the junior scholarship examination with credit after three years' tuition.

Excellent results have followed from the establishment of the carpentry class at the Greymouth District High School, under Mr. Arnott, who supervises and instructs free of charge. Some of the work performed by the boys is deserving of high commendation. I hope to see the requirements of the girls in the matter of technical education receive consideration.

On the whole, I have reason to congratulate the Board on the satisfactory condition of its schools.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Greymouth. Edward T. Robinson, Inspector

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. m.
Above Standard VI. ...	28	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	64	4	2	6	52	13 11
" V.	166	15	2	24	125	13 1
" IV.	233	34	6	30	163	12 0
" III.	231	19	6	29	177	11 3
" II.	208	10	10	20	168	9 1
" I.	177	7	3	9	158	8 9
Preparatory	563	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	1,670	89	29	118	843	11 5*

* Mean of average age.

WESTLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Hokitika, 8th February, 1892.

I have the honour to submit the Inspector's annual report for the year 1891, and also the tabulated statistics of the year's examinations as required by the regulations in Council.

It is hardly necessary I should remind the Board that this report must necessarily be an imperfect one, relating only to the last six months of the year, inasmuch as I did not enter on my present appointment till the middle of July. My time, therefore, until December was almost wholly spent in conducting the annual examinations of the schools, and my knowledge of these is restricted to what I have been able to glean at my visits for this purpose. My inability to visit the schools previously to examine them has, of course, been a disadvantage both to them and to me; since, on the one hand, it left me unacquainted with the degree of proficiency to which the schools had attained, and on the other deprived the teachers of the opportunity of ascertaining what my interpretation of the standards was likely to be, and consequently of preparing their children for it. It is desirable that these facts should be borne in mind in considering the following report.

The most noticeable feature of the year from the Board's point of view would seem to be the number of changes made in the teaching staff of the principal schools—a circumstance, I need hardly say, largely affecting the educational results of the year. I refer, of course, to the four schools of Kumara, Hokitika, Goldsborough, and Stafford, which may all be said to have received new head teachers this year, and one—I might almost say two of them—twice over; whilst the Hokitika School has been subjected to still further changes, the third assistantship having twice become vacant during the year. It is impossible to deny that so many changes, attended as such changes often are by a previous term of disorganization in the school, must have had an injurious effect on the progress of the scholars—a consideration to be balanced, however, by the thought that the Board has excellent ground for anticipating the best results in future from the new appointments.

Another circumstance calling for preliminary notice is the somewhat disagreeable fact that the number of school-children in attendance throughout the district is decreasing, being, as shown in Table I., 1,648 on the day of examination this year, as against 1,685 last year. As even a stationary roll-number is an unnatural phenomenon in a new country, this retrogression, though only to the extent of thirty-seven scholars, undoubtedly demonstrates a decline in resources, of which it is necessary to take notice, though too much significance need not be ascribed to it, especially in view of the fact that by opening a side-school at Dillmanstown, as the Board now purposes doing, the decline here pointed out will probably be more than neutralised.

Table II. shows the thirty-one schools now in existence throughout the district grouped into two classes, those of the first class, thirteen in number, consisting of schools whose roll-number is above thirty, and those of the second class, eighteen in number, which are all schools of the first grade—*i.e.*, schools of thirty scholars or less. Most of these eighteen schools are indeed very much smaller than the maximum here given, so that the sum of their roll-numbers amounts to only 218 scholars, or an average of twelve scholars and a fraction. It should be noticed, too, that ten of the eighteen are simply aided schools, whilst four, including two of the aided ones, are only half-time schools. On the other hand, the thirteen forming the first group show a combined roll-number of 1,430, or an average of 110 per school.

Coming, then, to the state of education in the district, and degree of proficiency of the schools as revealed by the examinations of the year, I may remark in the first place that I have been most favourably impressed by the evident effort made by the majority of the teachers throughout the district—the evident effort to overtake the whole work of the syllabus of instruction, and teach everything prescribed by the regulations in Council. It has repeatedly thrust itself upon my notice how large is the amount of time and labour devoted by the teachers to instruction in the class-subjects and even some of the additional subjects, and how conscientiously and thoroughly this part of the work is often done; and I am confirmed in this view by the statistics of this year's examinations, which show that the mean percentage obtained in class-subjects by the whole district is 40·2—a more favourable estimate than that made of the same work last year, which was 3·2 less. The schools in which this feature was most conspicuous are, in the first group, Woodstock, Kumara, Ross, Gillespie's, Arahura Road, and Hokitika.

But of course the real touchstone of efficiency for the education given in the schools is the results obtained in the examinations in pass-subjects; and here I regret to say my report will be far from favourable. I must therefore trouble the Board with a few words on the principle on which I have conducted my examination in these subjects, which comprise, as the Board is well aware, the fundamental ones of reading, spelling, writing, drawing, arithmetic, grammar, and geography. The mere enumeration of the subjects shows that these pass-subjects are by far the most important part of the school-work, and that this is the view taken by the department on the matter is apparent from the express injunction laid upon Inspectors by the Orders in Council, 1887 (Reg. 7), that, with a slight qualification, of which I have fully availed myself, no scholar shall be deemed to have passed for the standard who does not show a satisfactory knowledge of every one of the pass-subjects. It seems to me, therefore, that for an Inspector to adopt a method sometimes employed, and assign—say, 700 marks to these seven subjects, allowing a boy to pass for the standard who gains on the whole only 350 of them, and a girl who gets even 10 per cent. less, is to comply neither with the letter nor the spirit of the regulation; since it will thus often happen that a child by doing well in half the subjects, say the more mechanical ones of reading, writing, and drawing, with the addition of one other, perhaps spelling, will easily obtain the 350 marks required for a standard pass, whilst at the same time gravely or even wholly ignorant of such vital subjects as arithmetic, grammar, and geography. And a further almost inevitable result of adopting such a method must be to create a tendency on the part of schools to neglect the more intellectual and difficult subjects to which I have referred, since, as I have already pointed out, it would be possible for a child to pass his examination with little or no knowledge of these, and the very object of the Education Act be thus to a great extent frustrated. I have therefore discarded all such methods of testing the efficiency of a school, and have adopted the more usual practice of requiring the scholar, subject to the authorised indulgence already spoken of, to answer at least half the questions set in each of the pass-subjects in order to secure a pass for the standard. Had I done less than this, I should have felt myself culpable, not only as ignoring the very objects for which the schools exist, but as putting both scholars and teachers into a false position. For of two things we may be quite sure—1, that we can hardly do a more cruel thing to a scholar than promote him to a class for which he is unfit, since a child overclassed immediately becomes a child discouraged; and 2, that we can hardly inflict a greater injustice on a teacher, or paralyze his efforts more completely, than by requiring him to teach a class the scholars of which are incapable of doing the work of the class below them.

If I have succeeded in putting the matter clearly before the Board, it will now occasion it little surprise to learn that under this more severe ordeal a large number of scholars in many of the schools have failed to show the required proficiency, and that the percentage of standard failures for the whole district has risen in consequence from 17 to 30·6. Although, therefore, a grave defect in the education of the district is thus disclosed to view, it must not be supposed that this implies any decline in the diligence of the teachers, or any incapacity on the part of the scholars to reach the authorised standard, but simply the more strict application of a necessary, wise, and authorised test. For my own part, I have already seen enough of the teachers of the district to feel some confidence that they will willingly conform their teaching to the new call made upon them, and that another year's work will go far to remedy the defect here pointed out and reduce the percentage of failures to its former figure.

As showing the full significance of the unfavourable result just noticed a glance at Table III. appended to this report will be found helpful; it is a table to exhibit the percentage of scholars passed by the whole district in each pass-subject. The results of this table, agreeing, I may say, with my own observation, show very plainly, first, that three, or even four of the pass-subjects are, speaking generally, thoroughly and efficiently taught in most of the schools—viz., writing, reading, drawing, and spelling, the writing most so, and the other subjects in the order in which they are here mentioned. Indeed, this reference to drawing recalls to my mind the surprise which I have myself again and again experienced in my visits to the schools successively—surprise at the excellence of the results achieved by the pupils in this art, especially the freehand branch of it. At the same time it is impossible to misinterpret the testimony of Table III. as to the unsatisfactory character of the work done, and therefore of the teaching given, in the essential subjects of grammar, arithmetic, and geography, which can only be described by the positive, comparative, and superlative degrees of the adjective "poor." Whilst the pupils passed in reading are 87 per cent. of those presented, and in drawing 85, those passed in grammar are only 58 per cent., in arithmetic 56, and in pass geography, 55. In other words, nearly every second child on the average examined in these subjects has failed in them.

But to give merely the average of failure seems to me hardly right, first, as unjust to schools that have done well, and secondly, as by no means adequately exhibiting the gravity of the case in respect to the other schools. I have therefore prepared another table (Table IV.), showing the percentage of failures obtained in each of the thirteen schools of the first group in the three essential subjects already mentioned—viz., arithmetic, grammar, and geography; but, as the bulk of the failures occurs in the higher classes of the schools, I have confined the statistics of Table IV. to classes Standard VI., Standard V., and Standard IV. I will now take up the particulars furnished by the table for one or two of these schools; but, not to prolong this report unduly, I will confine my remarks to the arithmetic alone, referring any who may require similar information on the other subjects in these schools to the table itself. The schools I shall take up are those of Lower Kokatahi, Kanieri, Stafford, and Kumara. Although this order happens to be the inverse of their roll-numbers I have mentioned these schools in the order of their inefficiency, and the worst first. At Lower Kokatahi the net number of scholars presented in the three classes in question was seven, and as all these failed in their arithmetic, the percentage of failures in that subject was of course 100. I must add that four of the seven did not work a single sum correctly. At Kanieri

the corresponding number presented was fifteen, twelve of whom, including the whole of Standard VI., failed in this same subject, making, therefore, the percentage of failures for it eighty. Coming then to Stafford we have nineteen failing out of twenty-six presented, or a percentage of seventy-three, and here, as before, the whole of Standard VI. succumbed. And, lastly, in the case of the second largest school in the district—I mean, of course, Kumara—the net number presented in the three standards was sixty-two, of whom no less than forty-four, including the whole of Standard V., failed in this essential subject, whilst more than half the forty-four did not get one single sum right. Nor does that represent the worst of the case in respect to this school, as it has still to be mentioned that no less than sixteen scholars were absent from examination altogether in these three classes alone.

I have already shown what I hold to be the principal cause of the large measure of failure here chronicled, and therefore need not again refer to it; there are, however, one or two minor causes in the case of arithmetic which it seems desirable to enumerate, the first being the employment by the scholars of clumsy and obsolete methods of calculation. I allude more particularly to a practice which prevails almost universally in the schools—a practice of performing addition of fractions by first reducing mixed numbers to improper fractions, a method which I had hoped had disappeared fifty years since altogether, along with Walkingame's arithmetic. The use of this plan makes the sums so large and clumsy that children can hardly escape making errors.

Another cause of the poor results produced in arithmetic, and perhaps in the other two subjects also, is the unusually short time allotted to the subject in the time-tables of the schools. Thus I find that in most of the schools only four and a half hours a week are devoted to arithmetic, instead of the seven and a half hours which are often given to it in other education districts. For the sake of the intellectual discipline which the study of the subject furnishes, as well as for its practical utility, it is most imperative that, in primary schools at least, a considerable fraction of the school-day should be devoted to arithmetic. It may almost be said to be the principal subject which children are sent to school to learn, and to suppose that less than an hour a day will meet the requirements of the case is absurd.

On the subject of grammar I will not linger, though an additional cause of failure here has been the unsuitable text-books which have, up to a month or two ago, been in use in this education district; but as the Board has already removed this source of weakness, it is unnecessary to say any more about it. On one error in grammar, however, of almost universal prevalence in the schools of the district I must make a comment, as it exactly matches the antiquated arithmetic to which I have already referred. It is a new illustration of the force of habit, since it can hardly be from want of the requisite knowledge on the part of teachers, at least in the case of many of them, that they have tolerated the error in question in their schools. What I refer to is this, that in their parsing exercises the children have been allowed—I will not say taught—to call everything ending in *ing* a present participle, a practice which could only be paralleled had they been encouraged to dignify with the name of "gold" everything that possessed a bright-yellow colour.

And now for geography. This is the subject which has suffered most from the general cause of failure already more than once referred to. Indeed, judging by the answers and lack of answers I have found in the examination papers of the scholars, I have been forced to the conviction that the study of geography has been almost *systematically* neglected in many schools, and that there has been little actual teaching of the subject, so that even where it has not been neglected altogether, it has too often been suffered to degenerate into the mere conning of a text-book by the children. From many proofs of this I select the following incident for quotation. The class under examination was the Sixth Standard, and my question was this: "Write down the names of five towns situated on the River Mississippi or its tributaries." The head teacher thought this was a question to which he had a right to object on the ground that he was not sure that the text-book in use contained five cities so situated, he being apparently quite unaware of the fact that there was such a thing as a school-map, that the study of geography ought to be the study of a map, and that a class of Sixth Standard scholars could hardly have pored over a map of America for a twelvemonth without knowing the names of several cities situated on the banks of the principal streams. The gulf between theory and practice is proverbially a wide one, but it is surely high time that in Government schools, taught by men who may all be presumed to have passed at least one examination in the art of teaching, this idolatry of the text-book should be obsolete, at least in connection with geography. There are few mental employments more repulsive or more useless than that of committing to memory lists of geographical names from a text-book, nor can we wonder that a class should break down in geography on examination-day where such a practice prevails. This Board provides its schools liberally with maps: it has a right, therefore, to expect that the subject of geography should be taught orally by the teacher, and that the text-book should be relegated to a very subordinate place.

One other defect in the geographical teaching of the district probably only needs to be mentioned in order to be corrected. I allude to the general ignorance that seems to prevail amongst scholars in regard to the resources possessed by our own colony. For instance, I have often asked a class to enumerate the chief exports of New Zealand, but not even in the Sixth or Seventh Standard do the scholars seem to be aware that a chief export of New Zealand is *wool*.

I have already referred to the results collected in Table III., the table that shows the percentage of passes obtained by the whole district in each standard subject. But this table will assist us in determining another question as well. It is quite possible that some may suppose that the great increase in the percentage of standard failures this year may be due, at least in part, to the increased difficulty of the questions set by the Inspector. With the help of Table III., however, it is easy to show that such is by no means the case. In this table I have given not only the percentage of passes in each subject, but the mean of these, which is 74·3, making the mean percentage of *failures* in subjects 25·7. If now you will turn to Table IV. of last year's report, which is the

corresponding table to my Table III., although the mean percentage of passes in subjects for the year is not given, a slight calculation will show that it is 66·1; and consequently the mean percentage of *failures* in subjects for 1890 is no less than 33·9, or 8·2 in excess of mine last year. Here we have absolute demonstration that the schools have at least not been judged more severely this year than last. The only difference is in the circumstance that this year those scholars who have failed in two or more subjects have not been allowed a pass in standards. And how absolutely necessary is this proviso I think I have clearly shown in what I have now said in this report.

Having dwelt at such length on the pass-subjects this year I will omit any detailed reference to the other branches of the curriculum. Statistics referring to them will be found in Table II.

Attendance.—The sensitiveness or otherwise of the school conscience is always well indicated by the attendance of scholars on examination-day. Judged by this standard, the schools, with one exception, leave little to be desired; more than half of them presented their full muster-roll on the day of my visit, whilst eight of the remainder had but one absentee each; and in this eight is included the large Hokitika School, with its 362 scholars. The only serious offender in this connection is the Kumara School, as already once noticed, which, with a roll-number of 353 scholars, had no less than twenty-three absentees on examination-day in Classes I. to VI. I find, however, that it is not on examination-day alone that absentees are numerous at this school; on the contrary, a reference to its statistics makes it abundantly clear that the attendance was better on the occasion in question than at any other time during the year, the average annual attendance being only 75 per cent. of the average weekly roll-number, or 262 scholars out of 350; whilst, if the quarterly returns be taken instead of the annual, it will be found that at no period of the year did the children attend much better, the quarterly percentages of attendance being respectively 75, 74, 76, and 73 of the roll-number. That the results obtained on examination-day at this school were deplorable we have already seen, nor can one hope for much improvement next time unless the habits of the scholars are changed meanwhile in respect to attendance. It goes without saying that the most conscientious and devoted head-teacher can effect little in the education of scholars half of whom are absent half their time; for that, on reflection, will be seen to be the exact meaning of the annual percentage I have shown to obtain in this school. It is for the School Committee, if it will pardon the suggestion, to assist the teachers in this matter by each member taking it in turn to hunt up the absentees. Speaking generally, truant officers seem to effect but little.

Manners.—The Inspector is required by the regulations to report on the manners of the children attending the schools; I must speak, however, with 'bated breath on this point. What constitutes good manners in school children, or, rather, by what criterion shall an Inspector, who sees the same children once or twice a year only, determine their knowledge and practice of the courtesies of life? If I may be allowed to say so I think a very good test may be found in the reception they accord to a visitor to the school. Do they rise from their seats to welcome him on his entrance into the room, or do they remain stock-still as before, and just stare at him? In the latter case they could only be reported polite by the generosity of their visitor. The two schools of Woodstock and Hokitika, however, with four small schools in South Westland, need no such indulgence to escape the charge of bad manners.

Infant Classes.—In the generations to come, when men are wiser than now, the infant classes of a school will be regarded as more important than any others, and will receive the most thought and study from the teachers. From what I have seen of the infant classes of this district this year I am inclined to regard most of them as fairly efficient, and three of them as thoroughly so—namely, Hokitika, Bluespur, and Stafford. In the last of these there is no singing, it is true, and this is certainly a defect in the administration; but I am bound to acknowledge that in all other respects the work of this particular infant class was as well, if not better, done, than that of any other under the Board. Nevertheless there is no doubt that not only singing, but action-songs, as they are called, ought to form a principal item in the exercises of all infant schools, where the work should partake very much of the nature of play.

School Libraries.—One of the most powerful helps to the teacher—especially in country districts—is the existence of a good school library for the use of the children. Nothing does more to awaken mental activity in the children than this; whilst, on the other hand, it seems almost hopeless to attempt to excite any intellectuol enthusiasm in scholars who see no printed page from year's end to year's end except the reading-book which happens to be in use in their class. Some of the schools of this district, I am glad to see, are already provided with libraries, even the desolation of the remote South being relieved by a small collection of valuable books in the Okuru School, a circumstance of which the teacher is justly proud. Other schools, however, much nearer home are still without this necessary of school-life—I would instance the case of the two Kokatahi schools—and it is to be hoped that the community in each of these school districts will at once wake up to the fact, and, if the Board has no funds for the purpose, raise the small sum required by united effort. I say this in the interests alike of teachers and children.

District High School.—I do not like to close this report, both for personal and public reasons, without a word of reference to the Hokitika District High School. The condition of the Rector's class in this school, both as to number and efficiency, in this, the first year of its existence, has been such, if I may be allowed to say so, as to make its establishment a subject on which to congratulate both the Board and the district. The attendance showed from the first that the opportunities offered by the class were appreciated by the community, which may very reasonably take pride in the thought that it can now complete the education of its older and most advanced scholars without sending them away from home. The syllabus of work done in this class during the year, as well as the results obtained at the Inspector's examination of it, will be found as an appendix to this report.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman Education Board, Westland. John Gammell, B.A., Inspector.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Number of Schools presenting.	Average Age of those that passed.
							Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	57	...	...	...	...	13	...
Standard VI.	86	2	4	41	39	17	13 9
" V.	140	11	7	74	48	26	13 3
" IV.	183	13	2	58	110	26	12 2
" III.	236	9	15	67	145	25	11 4
" II.	222	3	9	23	187	28	10 8
" I.	197	3	6	33	155	25	9 4
Preparatory	527	...	...	...	...	30	...
Total ...	1,648	41	43	296	684	...	11 9*

* Mean of average age.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,— Christchurch, 19th February, 1892.

We have the honour to present the annual return for the past year, which it is our duty to make as Inspectors of the North Canterbury Education District.

In previous returns the limits of the calendar year have not been taken strictly as determining the period included, although this was not quite in accordance with the letter of the regulations. As in other districts, it was generally found convenient to include in the preceding series any examinations made before the 31st of March, the date on which the return referring to the preceding year was required, the period embraced year by year being thus substantially from March to March. The present return, however, in stricter accordance with the regulations, which as recently amended lay more stress on the point, relates to the calendar year 1891, and thus includes (with a certain limitation) three months' work already reported.

During a part of January the Inspectors were engaged, jointly with Mr. Veel, in finishing the results of the December examinations of pupil-teachers and scholarship candidates, and during the remainder of these three months in examining, with as much continuity as harvesting operations would permit, a number of schools, most of them of small size, or situated in outlying neighbourhoods. Sixty-three schools examined in this period were included in the last annual return. Thirty-one of these were examined again before the end of the year, and in the case of this group it has not been deemed necessary to count in or re-insert the results of the earlier examination. The remainder were, with the approval of the Board, arranged to fall due as the first of next year's series.

The work of examining schools was resumed on the 1st June, a month earlier than before, and was steadily pursued till, near the close of September, Mr. Wood's health compelled him to postpone his examinations, and, subsequently, to seek leave of absence. About the same time Normal School affairs brought a further interruption, so that, some time in October, it became necessary to appoint two acting Inspectors to overtake the work. To these gentlemen, Mr. T. S. Foster, M.A,, Headmaster of the West Christchurch School, and Mr. J. G. Lawrence Scott, B.A., Headmaster of the East Christchurch School, our warmest thanks are due. The Board has already expressed its appreciation of their services, but it may be permitted to their colleague for the time being to add his tribute to their unselfish devotion. They began work on the 20th October, and during the remainder of the year examined fifty-four schools, chiefly those in the southern part of the district.

To our great regret so large a portion of the Inspectors' time has been taken up in conducting school or other examinations, that separate inspection visits, to which both teachers and Inspectors in many cases attach considerable value, have been still further reduced in number during the past year. The months of April and May were alone available for this purpose, and a great portion of this interval was taken up with the preparation of statistics and of standard tests, the latter amounting to upwards of four hundred short examination papers in the written subjects of the higher classes. The most we could do, under the circumstances, was to select for visits those in which pupil-teachers in the last year of their apprenticeship were employed, and schools whose teachers had lately been employed for the first time in the district, or whose teachers the Inspectors for some other special reason desired to see at work.

During the year, from January to December, 196 schools were examined in accordance with the standard regulations. Twenty-two of these examinations were conducted by two Inspectors jointly, and if, as we see sometimes done in annual returns, each Inspector's work in such schools is reckoned separately, the total number of examinations becomes 218. Deducting from the former total the thirty-one schools examined a second time within the year, we get the complete series of 165, which forms the basis of the appended calculations.

It is very gratifying to be able to record a substantial advance on the results of our last report. On the days appointed for the examinations there were 20,816 children on the school-rolls. Of these, 14,302 were presented in the standard classes, being 340 more than the corresponding number in the previous year. A large percentage (78) of this increase is to be accounted for in the Fifth and Sixth Standards alone; and in connection with this fact we may here remark that one of the most noteworthy features to be found in our annual returns is the clear indication that year by year

a large proportion of our pupils remain long enough at school to complete the curriculum of instruction prescribed in the syllabus. The number of absentees has this year grown from 450 to 511, but we may fairly set off against this a decrease in the number of exceptions from 469 to 350. In passes and failures also the numbers show a decided improvement, being 11,237 and 2,065, as against 10,507 and 2,429 respectively in last year's return. The average mark assigned in class subjects has arisen from 45·8 to 47·9; in additional subjects there is no material difference.

The usual full information in regard to subjects, standards, and schools is contained in the appendices to this report.

We have, &c.,
L. B. Wood, M.A.,
W. J. Anderson, LL.D.,
Inspectors.

The Chairman, North Canterbury Education Board.

Table A.—Pass-subjects.

Classes.	Number presented.	Number absent.	Number excepted.	Number failed.	Number passed.	Proportion presented of Total Sch'l-roll.	Proportion passed of Total Sch'l-roll.	No. of Schools presenting.	Average Age of those that passed.
									Yrs. m.
Above Standard VI.	139	...	...	...	...	0·67	...	45	...
Standard VI. ...	756	18	18	154	566	3·63	2·71	120	14 0
" V. ...	1,614	61	51	412	1,090	7·75	5·24	143	13 2
" IV. ...	2,578	105	66	530	1,877	12·38	9·02	158	12 3
" III. ...	3,253	154	124	648	2,327	15·63	11·18	162	11 3
" II. ...	3,154	105	72	221	2,756	15·15	13·24	162	10 0
" I. ...	2,808	68	19	100	2,621	13·49	12·59	159	8 10
Preparatory ...	6,514	...	...	...	...	31·29	...	...	...
Totals for 1891	20,816	511	350	2,065	11,237	100·00	53·99	165	11 7*
Totals for 1890	20,779	450	469	2,429	10,507	100·00	50·57	164	11 8*

* Mean of average ages.

Table B.—Pass-subjects: Proportions calculated in Percentages.

Classes.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Failed, of Sum of Passes and Failures: Percentage of Failures.	
					1891.	1890.
Standard VI.	2·38	2·38	20·37	74·87	21·39	30·87
" V.	3·78	3·16	25·53	67·53	27·43	33·74
" IV.	4·07	2·56	20·56	72·81	22·02	28·25
" III.	4·73	3·81	19·92	71·53	21·78	25·29
" II.	3·33	2·28	7·01	87·38	7·42	8·72
" I.	2·42	·68	3·56	93·34	3·68	5·44
All classes ...	3·68	2.47	14·58	79·34	15·52	18·78

Table C.

Class-subjects.	Per-centages.	No. of Schools.	Additional Subjects.	Average Marks.	No. of Schools.
History	41·58	162	Repetition and recitation ...	12·68	163
Geography	58·60	165	Drill and exercises ...	11·42	140
Elementary science, object-lessons, &c.	43·37	165	Singing	11·05	136
Average of percentage on class-subjects	47·92	165	Needlework	14·57	157
			Subject-matter of reading-lessons	12·65	165
			Extra drawing	7·5	4
			Average of additional marks	57·82	165

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,— Education Office, Timaru, 28th February, 1892.

I have the honour to present my report on the schools in this district for the year 1891.

The number of schools in operation during the year was fifty-seven, being an increase of five over the number for the previous year. Visits of inspection were paid to fifty-four schools, and the usual standard examinations were conducted in all the schools, and the results of the examinations forwarded to the teachers before the close of the year. The following table shows the results of the examinations for the whole district:—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Passes on No. examined, omitting Exceptions.	Average Age of those that passed. Yrs.	Mos.
Above Standard VI....	66	..	...	...	...	...	...	
Standard VI. ...	194	9	10	44	131	74·8	13	11
" V. ...	394	26	23	111	234	67·8	12	10
" IV. ...	596	39	24	161	372	69·8	12	0
" III. ...	730	43	40	181	466	72·0	11	2
" II. ...	715	41	25	79	570	87·8	10	0
" I. ...	624	26	9	40	549	93·2	8	11
Preparatory ...	1,656	...	...	...	...	...	...	
Totals ...	4,975	184	131	616	2,322	79·0	11	6*

* Mean of average age.

The number of pupils presented on the examination schedules was 4,975, of whom 66 had already passed the Sixth Standard; 1,656 were in the preparatory classes; and 3,253 were entered for examination in one or other of the standards. Of the 3,253 in standard classes, 3,069 were at school on the day of examination, and 2,322 passed the standard for which they were presented. Of those who were not successful, 131 were "Exceptions" and 616 "Failures." The percentage of failures was 20·9, as against 20·4 for last year. The average percentage of marks for class-subjects was 56—a slight increase from last year—and the average of marks for additional subjects fell from 53 to 51.

In the appendices to this report will be found the results of the examination of each school. In the column in which are recorded the percentages of failures it will be found that in thirty-seven schools, with 3,715 children on the rolls, this percentage ranges from 0 to 30; in ten schools, with 925 children, from 31 to 40; and in the ten remaining schools, with 335 children, it mounts from 41 to 88. This last percentage was obtained in a side-school with ten children taught by a young woman who had no training whatever. With regard to the schools whose percentages lie between 31 and 40 it is but fair to state that nearly all are in this unsatisfactory position for the first time. To be in such a list more than once would be discreditable, and it would not be going too far to say that those schools which are there now for the second time are not in competent hands. In seven of the ten schools which showed worst in the matter of failures the results were due to the inefficiency of the teachers, and in the others they were due partly to inefficiency and partly to changing of teachers.

During the year a change of the teacher in charge took place in thirteen schools, and in eight of these the general results of the examination fell short of the average of the district as a whole. These changes occur more frequently in small schools taught by men than they do in similar schools where women have charge. This would be a strong plea for the employment of women in preference to men in our small schools if at the same time it could be shown that they are as successful teachers; and the following results will go far to prove that this is really the case: In twelve schools under the charge of women, with the school-rolls ranging from sixteen to fifty-three, and with a total roll-number of 366, the percentage of failures was 18·0, the percentage of passes 48·3, the average percentage of marks for class-subjects 55, and the average of marks for additional subjects 54. In twenty-seven schools under masters, with the school-rolls ranging from eighteen to sixty-three, and with a total roll-number of 1,086, the corresponding results were 25·9, 42·6, 55, and 41. In matters, too, which cannot be set forth in percentages and duly tabulated—in the order they maintain, in the discipline they exercise, in the power of influencing their pupils towards what is good and true in word and act—the women are not a whit behind the men. Of course, there are exceptions: we have weak women and strong men—one or two of the former, and ten or a dozen of the latter—as those who are particularly interested in this matter may easily discover by a perusal of the details of the examination for each school.

New regulations for the inspection and examination of schools and an amended syllabus of work come into force this year; and, as the time I have been in the position of Inspector under your Board just covers the period during which the examinations have been carried out under the old regulations, I think a favourable opportunity offers itself of comparing some of the results obtained in 1891 with those of 1886. The following table will be of use in making the comparison:—

Classes.	Number presented.		Number passed.		Proportion presented of total School-roll.		Proportion passed of total School-roll.		Percentage of Failures.		Number of Schools presenting.	
	1886.	1891.	1886.	1891.	1886.	1891.	1886.	1891.	1886.	1891.	1886.	1891.
Above Standard VI.	39	66	...	...	·73	1·33	...	...	...	...	12	18
Standard VI. ...	102	194	74	131	2·34	3·90	1·69	2·63	24·46	25·14	21	41
" V. ...	280	394	144	234	6·41	7·92	3·29	4·70	40·24	32·17	38	53
" IV. ...	450	596	222	372	10·31	11·98	5·08	7·48	44·36	30·20	42	55
" III. ...	678	730	354	466	15·53	14·67	8·11	9·36	37·78	27·97	46	56
" II. ...	645	715	521	570	14·78	14·37	11·93	11·45	10·08	12·17	47	57
" I. ...	597	624	499	549	13·68	12·55	11·43	11·03	8·44	6·79	47	56
Preparatory ...	1,581	1,656	...	...	36·22	33·28	...	...	...	...	48	57
Totals ...	4,365	4,975	1,814	2,322	100·00	100·00	41·53	46·65	25·50	20·96	48	57

The increase in the number of children presented is not very great, being 610 for the six years. It is certainly worth noting, however, how large a proportion of this increase has gone to swell the numbers in Standards IV., V., VI., and the class above Standard VI., which have increased from 864 to 1,250, from 19·7 per cent. of the school-rolls in 1886 to 25·1 in 1891. From the last available returns it appears that this percentage for the colony is 22·8. Taken all round, the results stated in the table show that, while the district is steadily increasing in numbers, a distinct advance has been made in the efficiency of the schools.

With respect to regularity of attendance, the district ought to show a better record than it does. Why should eighty-six children out of every hundred on the rolls of the schools in Otago be present every school-day, while in our schools we can muster only seventy-nine? Not only are we a long way behind the best in the matter of regular attendance, we fall short of the average for the colony. Those who attend irregularly are the despair of the teachers; they make little progress themselves, and are a drag on their fellows. It is a common saying among the teachers that, if there is one day of the year when a pupil who is notoriously bad in this respect is sure to put in an appearance it is the examination day. An attendance at the examination of 95 per cent. of the children shows that there is some ground for this statement. Nor is it a bad thing that they do turn out on that day; the pity is that those who have been the cause of their too frequent absences are not present too, to witness some of the immediate effects of their own indifference and folly.

I have not deemed it necessary in this report to comment on the methods employed by the teachers, and on the quality of the work done in the wide range of subjects that have a place in the syllabus, as I have already dealt with these pretty fully in the inspection reports presented to the Board during the year. I may state, however, that I have availed myself of the opportunities offered by my visits to the schools, and of the occasions when teachers have called upon me here, to enter into friendly talk with them about their methods and their work, and any criticism or suggestion of mine has generally been well received. It is always a pleasure to me to give what aid I can to a teacher who feels himself in a difficulty with regard to some point in the management of his school, and I am sure the sympathy which is engendered as we get to know each other better in this way is not an unimportant factor in promoting the educational welfare of the district.

I have, &c.,

JAS. GIBSON GOW, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, South Canterbury Education Board.

OTAGO.

SIR,—

We have the honour to submit the following report on the public schools of the Otago District for the year 1891:—

During the year all the schools were examined, and nearly all were visited for inspection. Of those not inspected, all but two were visited and found closed, or were officially reported to be closed when the Inspector was going the round of the district in which they lie. The time available for inspection is now less than a third of the year. The standard examinations take up considerably more than half the year, and of the remaining time a considerable proportion is occupied with the preparation of standard, scholarship, and pupil-teacher examination papers, the carrying out of the pupil-teacher and scholarship examinations, and the examination of the somewhat voluminous answers given by those examined. Were it not that much of this work is done during the school holidays we should not have time to go round every part of the district for the purposes of inspection. In some of the education districts the Inspectors are allowed assistance at the scholarship and pupil-teacher examinations, and it would be a great relief to us if the same were done here.

The following table shows the chief statistics of examination for the year:—

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Passes in Standards.	Average Age.
							Yrs. M.
Infants	7,782	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard I. ...	2,663	41	41	130	2,451	92	9 0
" II. ...	2,860	66	78	216	2,500	87	10 0
" III. ...	3,076	94	153	615	2,214	72	11 3
" IV. ...	2,607	72	105	540	1,890	72	12 2
" V. ...	1,954	55	73	497	1,329	68	13 1
" VI. ...	1,082	22	31	172	857	79	13 11
Above Standard VI. ...	284	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	22,308	350	481	2,170	11,241	...	11 6·8*

* Mean of average age.

There were presented for examination 22,308 pupils, of whom 14,242 were entered for examination in one or other of the standards, being twenty-nine less than the corresponding number for last year. In all 13,892 were present, and were examined in Standards I. to VI. Of these, 11,241 passed the standard for which they were presented—that is to say, 81 per cent. of the pupils examined in standards passed. In recent years this percentage has been as high as 84, and last year it was 82. The percentage of failures (the exceptions being omitted for this computation) was 15·4—a result a trifle higher than those for the last two years.

The average percentage of marks for class-subjects was 54. The marks given for these subjects varied very much in different schools. In some they were lower than in any previous year, but the good schools have made up for the defect in the bad ones, and the average percentage is exactly the same as last year's. The average of marks for additional subjects was 69. The number of pupils who were absent and of pupils who were excepted continues to be low, and we are glad to find that the percentage of exceptions, which had been slowly growing for some years, has now taken a downward turn.

We give, as usual, the following table, which furnishes a rough idea of the efficiency of the schools, so far as can be tested by examination results, by showing the number of schools in which the percentage of failures was low, moderate, or high:—

	Percentage of Failures.
11 schools (equal to 6 per cent. of the total number)	0 to 5
29 schools (equal to 15 per cent. of the total number)	6 to 10
66 schools (equal to 34 per cent. of the total number)	11 to 20
47 schools (equal to 24 per cent. of the total number)	21 to 30
25 schools (equal to 13 per cent. of the total number)	31 to 40
10 schools (equal to 5 per cent. of the total number)	41 to 50
7 schools (equal to 4 per cent. of the total number)	51 to 78

A comparison of these figures with those for last year shows a considerable decline in the number of schools with a percentage of failures of 10 or less. The schools that have dropped out of this high rank go to swell the total of fair efficiency. In other respects the table shows but little change.

On the whole, the examination-results fall very slightly below the level which they reached in 1889 and 1890. The pupils of Standards I. and II. made as good an appearance in every branch of their work as in any previous year, but in all the higher standards there has been a sensible decline in the percentage of passes. We do not think that this is in any great measure due to less efficient teaching. It is sufficiently explained by the circumstance that, owing to irregular attendance and other causes, the requirements of the syllabus in drawing were in many cases not fully complied with, and by the fact that in all the standard classes we have exacted for a pass in reading a somewhat higher proficiency than in previous years.

The subjects in which most failures are recorded are grammar (including composition) and arithmetic. In composition we have found the work of an unsatisfactory character in a considerable proportion of the schools, and more especially in the smaller ones. To this subject we attach very great importance; and we take no small pains to show teachers the chief faults in their pupils' exercises, with a view to their being remedied. The commonest defect is want of matter—the pupils have hardly anything to say. We do not see that there is any good excuse for this, as we are careful to set subjects with which the pupils should be familiar. In Standards IV. and V., where this defect is chiefly found, the subjects chosen are nearly always stories or other suitable lessons from the reading books which the children have been using for a year. As an example, we may instance the story of Abraham Lincoln's life in the No. V. Reader, which contains a good deal of interesting matter. In dealing with such a subject as this a large number of pupils show no grasp of the story as a story. The essay or letter is confined to an incident or two, generally of the hero's boyhood, given very much in the words of the book. A mere fragment of the matter they should be familiar with is all that is touched on, and it is given at a length altogether disproportionate to its importance. In the better schools a brief outline of the whole is sketched out; but in many cases nothing of the kind is attempted. Now, such a state of things as this seems to be due either to insufficient teaching or to bad teaching. In most cases the scholars have read the lessons repeatedly; they

are, or should be, familiar with the chief points of the story, and with these in their heads a fairly skilful teacher should have little difficulty in training them to write out an abstract or outline dealing briefly with all the principal facts. Such an exercise would necessarily be mainly in the pupils' own language, for if it gave a brief condensed version of the whole story it could not follow very closely the language of the book. It should, moreover, be easily within the pupils' powers, and, if suitably directed, would possess no mean educative quality. But though satisfactory exercises of this kind seem easily within the powers of pupils in Standards IV. and V., the fact remains that considerably more than half the numerous failures in grammar in these standards are due to the intolerably bad quality of such composition exercises. In Standard VI. similar exercises are, as a rule, of creditable quality, and this holds true of many of the smaller schools as well as of the larger ones. Another defect in the composition exercises was faulty division of the sentences; but this was in no way more prevalent than in previous years.

The faults on which we have been commenting are no doubt largely due to insufficient teaching of the subject. Under the new syllabus more time will probably be available for its study, especially in the smaller schools, so that improvement may be expected. But improvement will largely depend on a good selection of subjects. These should be such as are familiar to the pupils by reading or personal knowledge, and they should supply abundance of matter. Many of the lessons in the reading books, the object-lessons, and some of the science lessons, afford subjects fulfilling these conditions, and in all schools these should be largely used as texts for composition exercises.

The failures in arithmetic, though still numerous, are not more so than in previous years. Accuracy in simple computation is still much to be desired, and marks are as often lost for the want of it as for inability to solve the simple problems set. A considerable proportion of the failures in standards is due to pupils having got no marks at all in this subject. In a good many of these cases the other subjects were well known. A notable fact about arithmetic is the inequality of the answering by the pupils of the same class. It is seldom that some do not answer well, while others do badly or perhaps get no marks at all. Mental arithmetic is very generally taught, and often with marked success. As a rule, the neatness of the arithmetical work on slates cannot be commended, and in a considerable number of schools the steps of the work and their meaning are not clearly set out. Unless pupils are trained to do this in their everyday work, no one can reasonably expect them to do it when the examination comes round.

In a majority of the schools, and in the larger ones more especially, the reading was good, and in not a few it was excellent. Even in the others fluency of a kind was rarely wanting, but the reading was indistinct or devoid of natural expression. The instructions to inspectors require them to insist on ready and expressive reading, and in giving effect to the Minister's directions on this topic we have been compelled to fail a large number of pupils whose reading was fairly fluent but monotonous and expressionless. In nearly every school Standards I., II., and III. have read two books, and the more extended course of instruction has certainly led to greater readiness. It is matter for regret that the number of books to be read by the infant classes has not been more clearly defined, for much benefit would accrue from the perusal in these classes of a larger quantity of easy reading matter. In some cases very little judgment was shown in deciding the order in which reading books were taken up, a more difficult book being read before an easier one—the No. II. Star Reader, for example, before No. I. of the graduated series. Explanation of the language of the reading lessons was not on the whole as well done as we could wish, but there were many exceptions to this general statement. This defect was quite as prevalent in the larger as in the smaller schools. Preparatory study of the meaning of difficult passages needs to be more generally encouraged. In some cases it seems not to be attempted, and many children either have no dictionary, or have one that is of hardly any use. When time has allowed of it we have heard the pupils of Standard VI. read in a book or newspaper which they have not seen before. With easy matter the test was on the whole very fairly met; where it was difficult the pupils should have felt that they had still much more to learn in reading.

Writing and drawing are satisfactorily taught in most schools. The latter takes up a great deal of time, much more than can be spared in the smaller schools. This time has usually been found at the expense of writing, which has not, however, deteriorated to any marked extent, though improvement has been checked. In most of the larger schools the writing in exercise books is carefully superintended, and this has helped to keep its quality up to a fair average. Both drawing and writing vary very much under different teachers according as their influence with their pupils is great or small. A considerable variety of copy-books, some of them differing widely in style, has been found in use. To a certain extent this is a disadvantage, as pupils on moving to other schools have sometimes to entirely change the style of writing which they have been practising.

The marks for class-subjects and also the additional marks are the same as those for last year. On the whole, pupils do not now know the history read as well as they did when it was a pass-subject, and pupils and teachers too seem more indifferent about it. Geography, on the other hand, though taught with no great intelligence, was for the most part very fairly known. In some cases the drawing of maps of New Zealand, with the filling-in of important details, was badly done, and there were but few schools in which it is well done. In this subject a great deal of matter is taught, but with too little discrimination. The outstanding features are left on a level with the subordinate ones and not brought sufficiently into relief. In the oral examination we have endeavoured to discourage this, and we are glad to find that the new syllabus curtails the matter to be taught, a change which should lead to a more intelligent and interesting handling of the subject. Elementary physical geography, though everywhere taught, was seldom well known.

Science and object-lessons generally receive due attention, and the latter has been taught with very fair success. We can hardly say the same of the science teaching, except with regard to elementary physiology, and the principles of agriculture—a subject taken up in most of the rural schools. A few teachers have also given a good course of lessons in the elements of physics and

chemistry. Sewing and the other additional subjects, with the exception of singing, are taught in a very satisfactory way. In a large number of schools singing also is very fairly taught, and in a few well.

The infant-classes—a term which includes all the classes below Standard I.—are for the most part well taught. They read readily and in good style, and receive a thorough training in tables and counting. Their instruction in the smaller schools has made great advances during the last two or three years. The large infant departments of the city and suburban schools are in general very well conducted, and their excellent condition reflects great credit on the mistresses charged with their control.

Looking at the schools as a whole we have every confidence that they are doing sound educative work. As a body the teachers are anxious to employ the best methods, and most of them strive to mould their teaching on inductive lines. The government is good so far as the order and the behaviour of the pupils are concerned. If the attention during lessons is not equally satisfactory, it is because classes are large, and the power to influence and control numbers is a somewhat rare gift, and one but little considered nowadays in the selection of teachers for important and responsible positions. It is true that year by year a good many of our pupils fail to pass the standard examination, but the significance of this fact is greatly exaggerated in popular estimation. The majority of those who fail are in point of proficiency but little below those who barely pass. It is one of the evils of the standard-pass system that it creates a momentous distinction where there is but little real difference. In a series of papers or answers of nicely graduated merit the examiners have to draw a line between those that pass and those that fail. Those just above the line, and those just below it, are really of nearly equal merit; but, as soon as the verdict of pass or fail is pronounced, this is wholly forgotten. The boy who answers fairly and passes becomes a sort of hero; the one who is perhaps 5 or 10 per cent. below him fails, and is thought to have learnt next to nothing. To suppose this is, however, a very great mistake, for the difference in ascertained attainments between the two is very often no more than 5 or 10 per cent., and the difference in their actual attainments may be *nil*. Those who know the real state of the case can have no doubt that many of the pupils of our schools who do not pass have yet received a very fair education—an education quite equal to that gained not so many years ago by the average pupils of the schools of this district. A great and growing obstacle to the success of the schools arises out of the ceaseless and often unmeaning migrations of teachers. The work of education is interrupted and marred by these changes to an extent that is but vaguely realised. We venture to say that the genuine promotions that are made in a year could be all made by a wise centralised authority with not more than a fifth of the changes that now take place to bring them about. The loss of time, the waste of effort, and the expense to teachers that result from these changes, rank among the most serious evils in connection with our education system. As regards the improvement and embellishment of the school grounds, we can report some progress. When teachers take root in a district the gardens and surroundings of the school are usually in good order; but where the spirit of migration rules the fences and plantations are frequently neglected, and a smiling garden is rarely seen. This is much to be regretted, but it can hardly be otherwise. What a man sows he likes also to reap.

In our last report we referred to the unsuitable line of study often adopted for the class above Standard VI. We cannot say that there has been much improvement in this matter, but we take every opportunity of bringing the adoption of better arrangements under the notice of teachers.

We have, &c.,
D. Petrie,
Wm. Taylor,
P. Goyen,
Inspectors.

The Secretary, Otago Education Board.

SOUTHLAND.

Sir,— Education Office, Invercargill, 4th March, 1892.

We have the honour to lay before the Board our general report for the year ending 31st December, 1891.

We made 117 examination, and 121 inspection visits. The examination results for the year are shown in the following table:—

Table A.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. M.
Above Standard VI. ...	63	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	282	13	10	56	203	14 5
" V. ...	693	20	43	207	423	13 5
" IV. ...	984	32	64	209	679	12 6
" III. ...	1,305	51	95	297	862	11 5
" II. ...	1,183	36	39	71	1,037	10 2
" I. ...	1,069	27	16	47	979	9 3
Preparatory ...	3,026	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	8,605	179	267	887	4,183	11 10*

* Mean of average age.

From this table it is seen that the number of pupils presented for examination in classes S. 5, S. 6, and S. 7 is much greater than in former years. In 1889 these classes were represented by 713 pupils, in 1890 by 888 pupils, and in 1891 by 1,038 pupils. This increase is a most hopeful sign, and a matter for sincere congratulation.

Table B.

	1889.	1890.	1891.
Percentage of passes	47·6	48	46·3
„ of failures	16·6	17·1	17·5
„ in class-subjects	54·7	55	57
Average of additional marks	54·4	57	60
Percentage of absentees	3·2	3·6	3·2
„ of pupils excepted	4·9	5·3	4·9

From this table it will be seen that the percentage of failures in standards shows a slight increase. This is no doubt due to the marked annual increase in the number of scholars presented for the upper standards, where a "pass" is much more difficult of attainment than in the lower. On the other hand, the table reveals a gradual increase in the number of marks awarded for class and additional subjects, which goes to show that the general efficiency of the schools is year by year becoming greater.

Of the 117 schools examined, 37 make 10 or under 10 per cent. of failures; 41 make over 10 or under 20 per cent.; 21 make over 20 or under 30 per cent.; 12 make over 30 or under 40 per cent.; 5 make over 40 or under 50 per cent.; 1 makes 63 per cent. There are thus in all eighteen schools—those, namely, that make more than 30 per cent. of failures—that have made what may be deemed a decidedly unsatisfactory pass. In four schools the poor results are ascribed to changes in the teaching staff; in three, to irregular attendance; in one, to the continued sickness of the teacher; and in two, to the fact that the examination year was shortened by about two months. For the others no reasonable excuse has been adduced; in their case the indifferent results must be attributed to the incompetence, the indolence, or the sheer indifference of the teachers.

The following schools gained the highest percentage of marks in class-subjects:—Caroline, 90 per cent.; Gummie's Bush, 83 per cent.; Wyndham, 82 per cent.; Waimumu, 82 per cent.; Wendonside, 80 per cent. These figures furnish a noteworthy commentary on the remark, ever on the lips of some teachers, that there is, in country schools, no time for teaching anything but the pass subjects.

The following schools gained the highest aggregate of marks for additional subjects: Wyndham, 106 marks; Lumsden, 103; Gordon, 96; Otautau, 94. Many of the smaller country schools, in which the teacher is unaided, stand high in respect to the additional subjects, but they cannot compete on equal terms with schools more liberally staffed. Taking a general survey of the year's work, we gladly note improvements in several directions. First, in a number of schools organisation has improved; the forces available for the effective and expeditious performance of work are better and more freely applied; and, as a consequence, where the complicated school machinery was formerly sluggish and jerky, every part now runs smooth and steadily. Second, Standard VII., which in past years was too often a nondescript, do-nothing kind of a class, has this year done creditable work in nearly every school in which it has been presented. The practical result to some extent appears in the fact that several of the pupils successfully passed the Junior Civil Service examination, one of them—A. Duncan, of Wyndham—being fourth on the list for the whole colony. The instruction given to this class, being directive rather than specific, has in no way proved detrimental to that given in the junior classes. In point of fact, in schools where Standard VII. was most efficient, there, too, were the lower classes highly efficient. Third, a desire to improve and refine the manners of the children is steadily growing. It is pleasant to hear the hearty "Good morning, sir," or "Good afternoon, sir," with which the teachers are greeted; and pleasant also to see the neat courtesy of the girls, and the frank salute of the boys, as they enter and leave the class-room. Fourth, arrangements, more or less complete, are being made in an increasing number of schools for the profitable employment and rational instruction of the infant-classes. In most of the larger as well as in many of the smaller schools these are now supplied with appropriate and varied exercises, upon which the beginnings of the severer studies may be easily and naturally grafted. Fifth, there is all over the district an evident improvement in the methods of imparting instruction. This indicates that the teachers as a body are alive to the exigencies of their profession, and that, while they despise cram as such, they make the avenues to knowledge as easy and as alluring as possible. This general statement is unfortunately sharply qualified by a reference to the table of percentages of failures already given. Bound by the chains of traditional routine, some of our teachers give little or no consideration to the higher and vital phases of their profession; while a few, fortunately a very few, are satisfied with a perfunctory discharge of their duties, apparently regarding their work as a piece of necessary drudgery. The former have the excuse of at least conforming to time-honoured custom, but for the latter not even a shadow of an excuse can be found. And when, as in their case, indolence is added to indifference, it is clear they have reached a point at which the Board should put its foot down and demand a swift and thorough reformation.

Though doubtless an anxious time for both teachers and scholars, examination-day usually passes smoothly enough with the examiner. He, as a rule, has much to encourage him. In nine cases out of ten the thoughtfulness of the teachers and the spontaneity of the children make his task comparatively easy; the appliances for carrying out the work of examination are at hand; the pupils are in their places, ready to begin; and all look forward to a successful issue of the day. And here the exception markedly sets off the rule; for if the examimer finds, as upon occasion he does, teachers, scholars, and school in a state of confusion, he must, however reluctantly, assume the *rôle* of censor at the very outset of the examination.

Failure at examination is sometimes attributed to nervousness. Now, though it is a factor for which due allowance must be made at every examination, nervousness pure and simple causes children to fail in only extremely rare cases. Not infrequently, however, it is weakly conjured up merely to cloak the general unpreparedness of pupils. But the examiner, on whose notice real nervousness painfully obtrudes itself, cannot be deceived by a subterfuge so transparent. No doubt the tension on children's nerves, caused partly by close application, and partly by anxiety, does sometimes result, even in the best of schools, in a mild form of examination fever; but even this would be reduced practically to a minimum were teachers themselves to test their schools at regular intervals, and to refrain from shaking the terrors of the Inspector over the heads of the children as the time of the examination draws near. Indeed, by reminding children of the doom that will overtake them at the examination, teachers not only attach a stigma to failure which, in the case of some pupils, might be the best thing that could happen, but also give the ordeal an air of grimness that interferes with the chances of legitimate success.

Examination and inspection are supplementary the one to the other. On examination-day the Inspector casts up results expressible in figures, and on inspection-day sees how these results have been obtained. But this is not all. On the latter day there becomes evident that which eludes his grasp on examination-day, and which is too subtle to be expressed numerically—viz., the general tone of the school. The Inspector mentally asks such questions as the following, and in due course finds the answer: Is the teacher in touch with his pupils? Is there in the school an *esprit de corps?* Are the pupils honourable in their work and play? Is the work of the school carried on according to a definite plan, or at haphazard? And, again, it is also to be seen how far the school is in touch with the broader aims of general culture; whether, for instance, there is a school library, an interest in natural objects as shown by a school collection, a desire to improve the physique of the pupils by the practice of rational games, a respect for property as well as for schoolmates, and a taste for the beautiful as shown in the drawing-lesson, the singing-lesson, and the cultivation of the school garden. It need hardly be said that but few of the Board's schools have reached this standard of excellence; but it is extremely encouraging to know that an ever-increasing number of teachers work towards an ideal equally high, if not even higher.

The pupil-teachers—there are now fifty in the district—being an important factor in the education of our youth, deserve a more than passing notice. Evincing both in practical teaching and in their literary course a spirit at once ardent and conscientious, they in many respects do admirable work. Head masters, as a rule, are not slow to recognise their youthful energy and to direct it into useful channels. Cases of neglect, however, have come directly or indirectly under our notice. In more than one instance pupil-teachers have had but scant justice from head-masters by whom their studies have been for a longer or a shorter time either entirely neglected or treated in an indifferent and perfunctory manner. The examination of the work done by some of the pupil-teachers at midwinter leaves a strong suspicion that they are left to grope drearily through set tasks, whereas the Board rightly expects for them thorough and methodic teaching. How else are they to acquire a practical knowledge of their calling? The literary course prescribed by the Board, if steadily and systematically followed, will not prove too hard for the average pupil-teacher; and, as there is no training college in this district, there is no reason why at the close of the last year of their apprenticeship the majority of pupil-teachers should not pass the E examination. We could name head masters who carry their pupil-teachers far beyond the requirements of a bare pass at the annual examination; and surely so much can be expected of all to whom the welfare of promising young men and women is entrusted. We would not for a moment have it understood that book-lore is the primary aim of pupil-teachers; compared with health and general culture it is a secondary one. With judicious and sympathetic guidance, however, these aims will not only not conflict, but will stimulate and strengthen each other. With respect to the cases of neglect mentioned, we would strongly recommend the Board to make a rule that when at any time head-teachers cannot carry out the Board's instructions to the letter, they shall intimate the fact to the Board's Secretary at once.

Many of our schools are now conducted by young women, who have completed their terms of apprenticeship as pupil-teachers under the Board. We willingly testify to the faithful and able manner in which they discharge their duties.

Bitter complaints are sometimes heard from teachers in various parts of the district regarding the irregular attendance of a too large proportion of their scholars. The evils of irregular attendance are manifold and far-reaching. Children that are the victims of the habit acquire, in the worst possible way, only a smattering of knowledge; they are grossly unjust to their class-mates, whom they tend to drag down to their own level, and they are the worst of the many plagues that afflict the honest teacher. They gradually come to regard the school as a prison, the teacher as a bore, and study as a nuisance; and when they leave school they will probably become ignorant men and women, useless members of society, and undisciplined citizens.

Some of the best teachers in the service fight manfully against a habit so fatal to the wellbeing of their schools. It is, however, but little they can do in the way of checking it, unsupported as they often are by parents and committees.

We refrain from reporting in detail on the subjects of instruction, that having been fully done during the year in connection with the examination of each school. Nor do we attempt to forecast the results that the adoption of the modified syllabus is likely to produce in our system of primary education.

Appended to this report are the usual tables.

We are, &c.,
JAMES HENDRY,
GEO. D. BRAIK,
Inspectors.

The Secretary, Education Board, Invercargill.

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